

LEADING
No 7
SUMMER
ISSUE

Ten Cents



Leading COMICS

PRESENTING
YOUR FAVORITE WIZARDS
OF THE LAW
AND
"THE WIZARD OF WISSTARK"



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*Because the War Production Board has ordered all publishers to use 10% less paper than in 1942, MORE FUN and ADVENTURE will be published bi-monthly, ALL-STAR COMICS and WONDER WOMAN will become quarterlies, ALL-AMERICAN COMICS will be published only eight times, and PICTURE STORIES FROM THE BIBLE only twice in 1943.

GOOD BOOKS WORTH READING

reviewed by **JOSETTE FRANK,**

Director of Children's Reading,

CHILD STUDY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA



SPOTLIGHT FOR DANNY

By **Lorraine and Jerrold Beim**

Illustrated by **Corinne Malverne**

Suppose you met a great movie director who looked at you and suddenly asked: "How would you like to be a movie star?"

That's what happened to eleven-year-old Danny Gordon—and the movie director meant it, too, because Danny looked just the part for a character in a picture he was planning. So after an exciting screen test that proved him the right type for photographing, Danny was taken out of school and whisked clear across the country to Hollywood.

The life and work of a young movie actor had its ups and downs. Some of it was fun—like meeting the big stars and having people point you out to one another. But some of it was not such fun. Danny learned a lot—and so does the reader—about how pictures are made: all about costuming and make-up, how the "sets" are put together, lighting and acting, and shooting the scenes. He also discovered, when he made friends with some boys and girls in an humble bungalow court, that many very good people would like to be in movies but haven't been able to make the grade.

And so, in the end, when Danny's pictures turned out to be not so good as they had all hoped, Danny took his own disappointment pretty bravely and went back East to pick up again all the pleasant things of ordinary living which looked very good to him after his hectic journey into movieland.

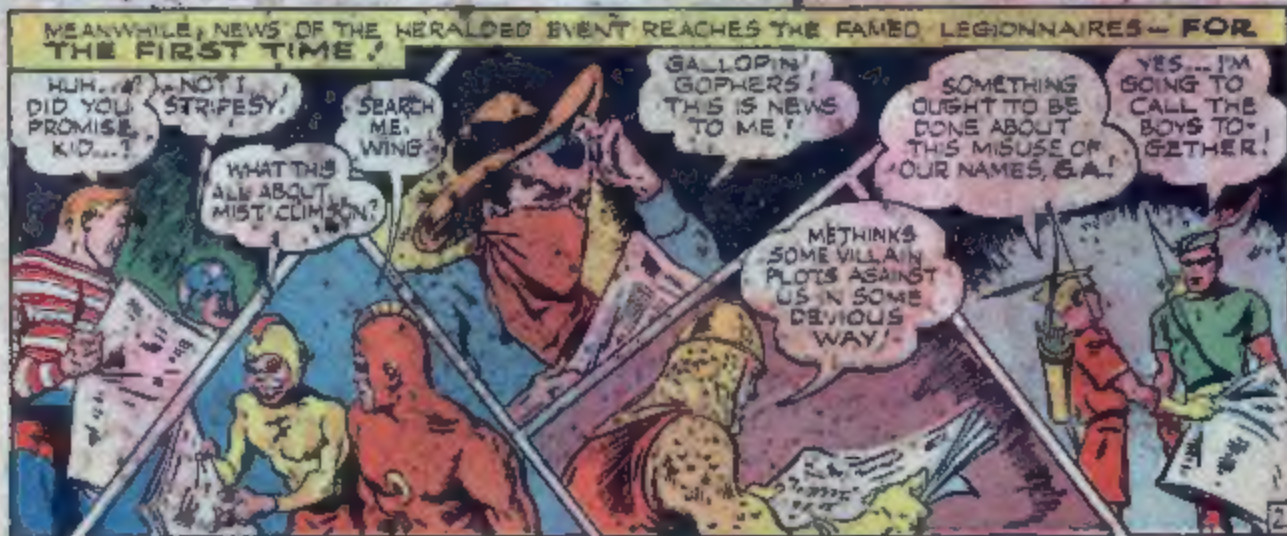
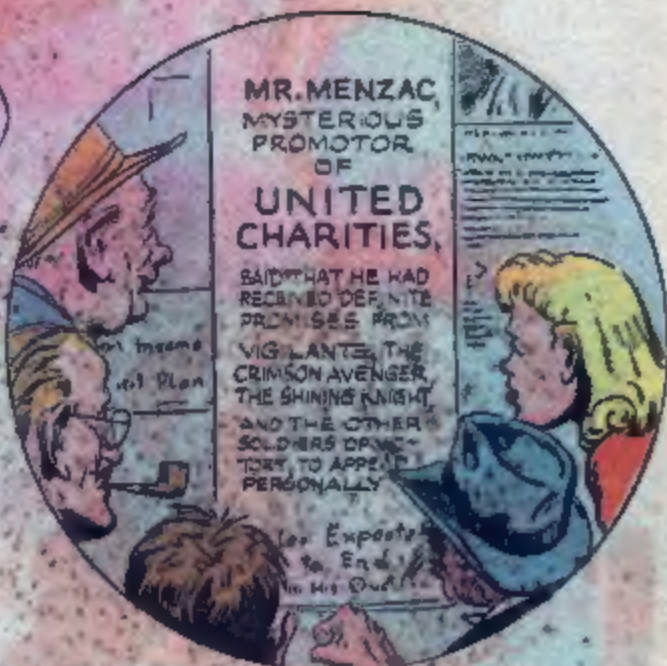
This is a fine new story, and it all rings true. Ask your librarian for it.



CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME... BUT IT DOESN'T END THERE! FROM THE STAR-STUDDED STAGE OF A GREAT AUDITORIUM, A GENEROUS IMPULSE LURES THE SEVEN SOLDIERS OF VICTORY TO AN UNKNOWN LOTUSLAND BEYOND ICE-CAPPED PEAKS, WHERE STRANGE MAGIC AWAITS THEM... AND THOUGH A MYRIAD OF MORE MENACING MIRACLES LIES AHEAD, THE DAREDEVIL LEGIONNAIRES, FEARING NEITHER MAN NOR MAGICIAN, PLUNGE BOLDLY FORWARD, AS WITH EVER-READY WITS AND MATCHLESS COURAGE THEY ANSWER THE SUMMONS TO MYSTERY AND DANGER FROM THE

"WIZARD OF WISSTARK!"

HIGH-SPEED PRESSES ROAR, AND MORNING HEADLINES BLAZON GREAT NEWS TO THE DWELLERS OF A BUSY METROPOLIS!



THE CLARION CALL OF THE GREEN ARROW
ASSEMBLES THE CLAN OF HEROES...

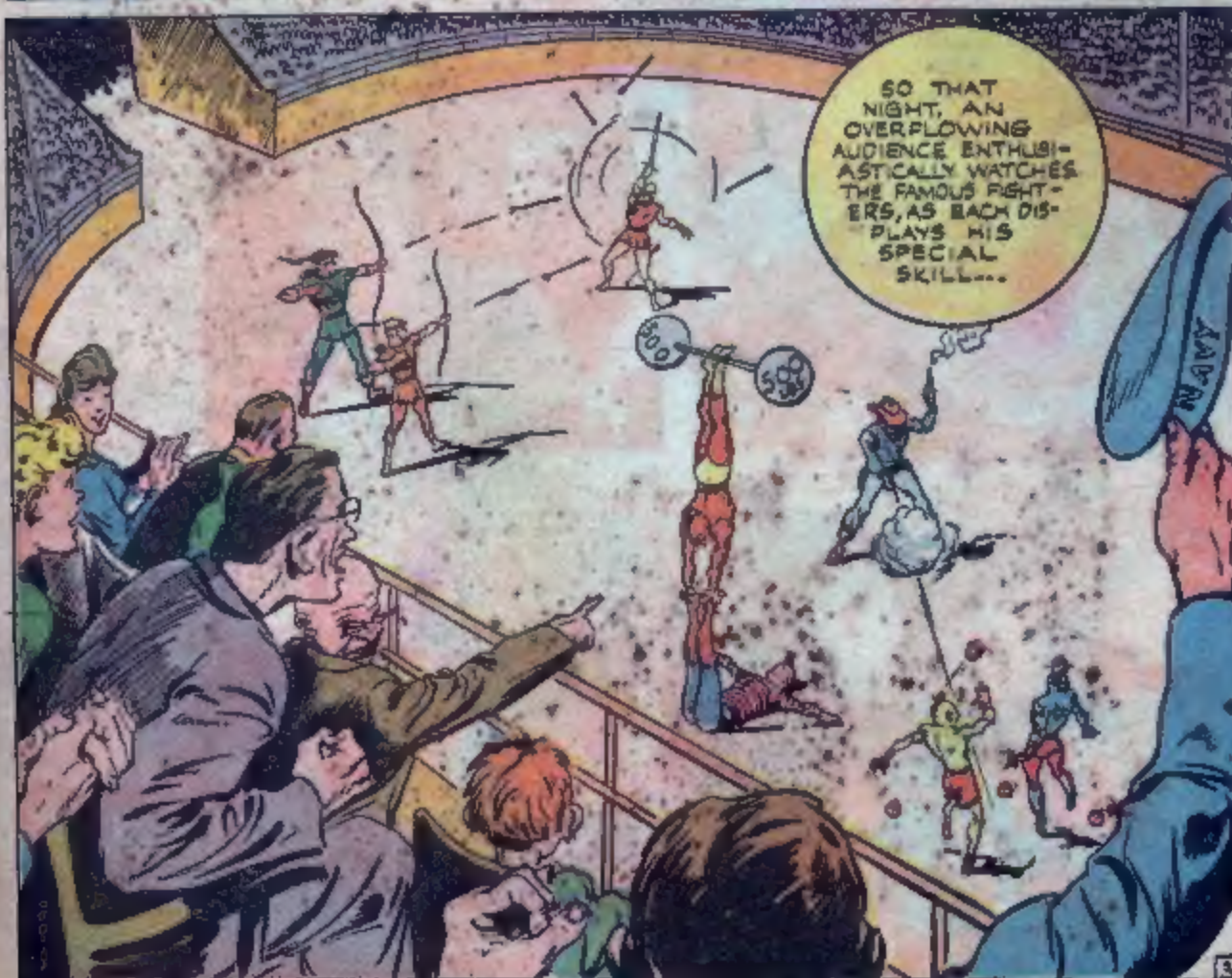
GENTLEMEN, THIS MAN MENZAC
LIED DELIBERATELY WHEN HE SAID
HE WAS IN TOUCH WITH US!
BUT HIS LIE HAS SOLD A
GREAT MANY
TICKETS!

SOUNDS
TO ME
LIKE
SOME HOSS
THIEF THOUGHT
UP A SLICK
SCHEME TO
GET RICH!



THEN WE'LL MAKE SURE
THAT HIS SCHEME
FAILS! WE'LL SEE
TO IT THAT HE
DOESN'T GET
AWAY WITH THE
MONEY!

BUT WE CAN'T
DISAPPOINT ALL
THOSE PEOPLE WHO
EXPECT TO SEE US!
WE'LL HAVE TO
SHOW UP AS WE'RE
SUPPOSED TO!



SO THAT
NIGHT, AN
OVERFLOWING
AUDIENCE ENTHUSIAS-
TICALLY WATCHES
THE FAMOUS FIGHT-
ERS, AS EACH DIS-
PLAYS HIS
SPECIAL
SKILL...

BUT AS THE PERFORMANCE ENDS...

AT LEAST ONE OF US KEPT AN EYE ON MENZAC ALL THROUGH THE PERFORMANCE! SO FAR, HE HASN'T MADE A SINGLE MOVE TO GET AWAY!

MAYBE HE'S WAITIN' TO MAKE SURE HE GOT ALL THE DOUGH!

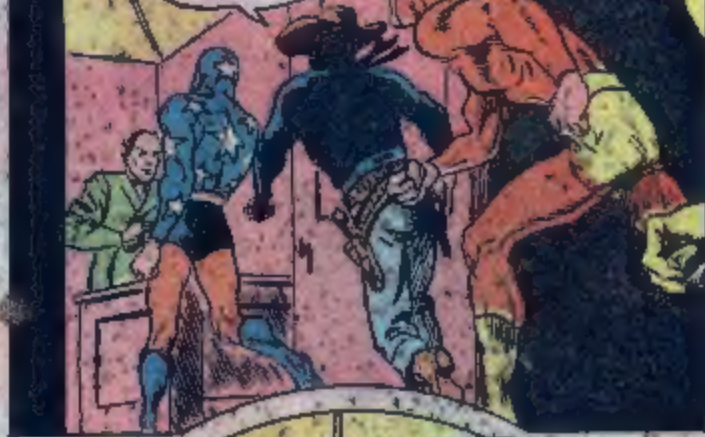
LET'S GET TO HIM FAST!



LOOK... HE'S ALL SET TO LEAVE!

AND HE'S GOT THE LOOT IN THAT BAG!

YOU PROMISED THAT MONEY TO CHARITY, MR. MENZAC... AND THAT'S WHERE IT'S GOING!



EXACTLY! IT IS AT YOUR DISPOSAL, GENTLEMEN!

HUH...? IF YOU'RE AS HONEST AS ALL THAT, WHY DID YOU INVENT THAT STORY ABOUT OUR PROMISING---



TO SUMMON YOU TOGETHER! THE CHARITY SHOW WAS MERELY A MEANS TO AN END! I KNEW THAT ONLY SOME WORTHY CAUSE WOULD AROUSE YOUR INTEREST! NOW I'LL TELL YOU THE **REAL** REASON FOR MY DESIRE TO MEET YOU!



I AM AN EMISSARY OF THE WIZARD OF WISSTARK! HE NEEDS YOUR HELP... DESPERATELY! IT IS MY DUTY TO BRING YOU TO HIM!

PARDNER, WHAT KIND OF A WIZZER ARE YOU TRYING TO RUN ON US, WITH YOUR LOGO TALK ABOUT WIZARDS?

WISSTARK! I'VE STUDIED GEOGRAPHY IN MY TIME, BUT I'VE NEVER HEARD OF SUCH A PLACE!



AT LEAST, LET ME SHOW YOU THE AIR-SHIP THAT BROUGHT ME HERE! MAYBE YOU'LL BE READY TO BELIEVE THE REST, WHEN YOU SEE THAT!

THIS MAN HAS DONE MUCH FOR CHARITY! LET US ACCEDE TO HIS SIMPLE REQUEST!

SURE! LET'S GIVE THE CRATE A BANDER! WHAT KIN WE LOSE?



AND SO, LATER, THE INCREDULOUS SOLDIERS OF VICTORY FIND THEMSELVES ABOARD AN EXTRAORDINARY SHIP OF THE SKIES!

NEVER HEARD OF A PLANE LIKE THIS BEFORE!

MAYHAP THIS IS INDEED A WIZARD'S WORK! AN HE BE SO MIGHTY, WHY NEEDS HE OUR HELPS? MY CURIOSITY IS GREAT!



THE DECISION IS MADE TO ACCOMPANY MENTAC!

WE'RE MOVIN', PRYORS! AND I AIN'T SORRY! I GOT A KIND OF HANKERIN' TO SEE THAT WIZARD!

SOUTHWARD SPEEDS THE STRANGE VESSEL... AND AFTER MANY HOURS OF TRAVEL...

THAT MUST BE THE ANTARTIC! NOTHING BUT SNOW AND ICE ANYWHERE!

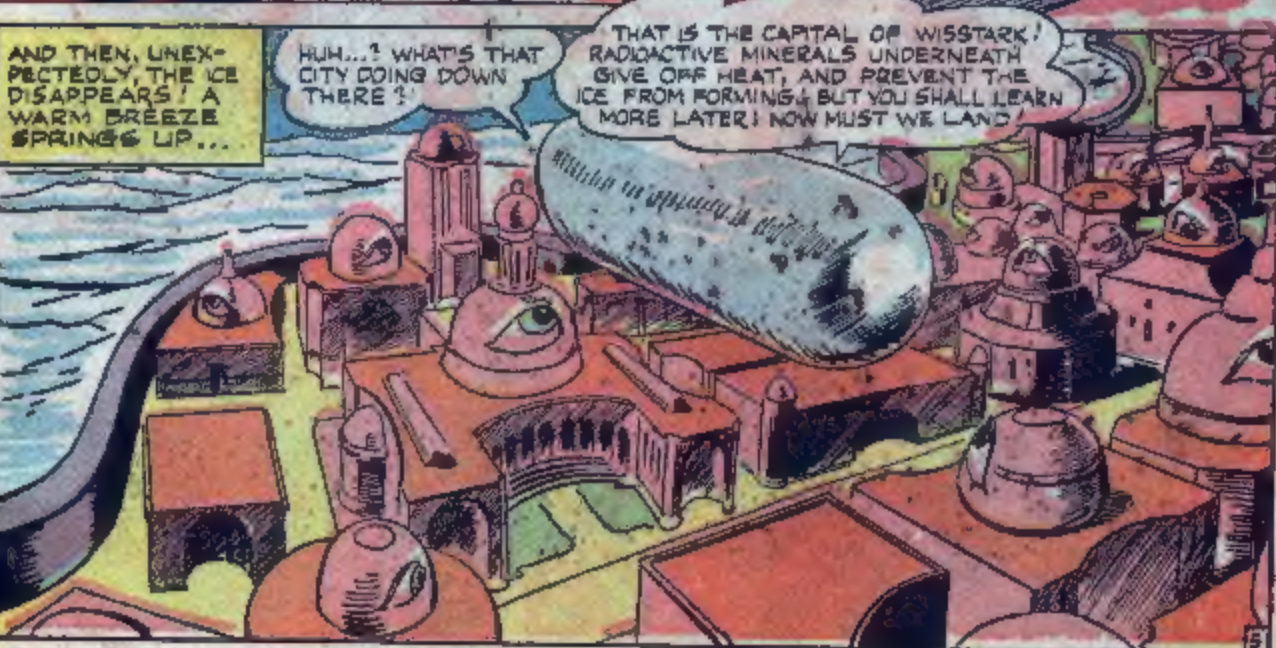
AH, WOE! PLENTY COLD BELOW... AND WINS NO BLING WINTA COAT!

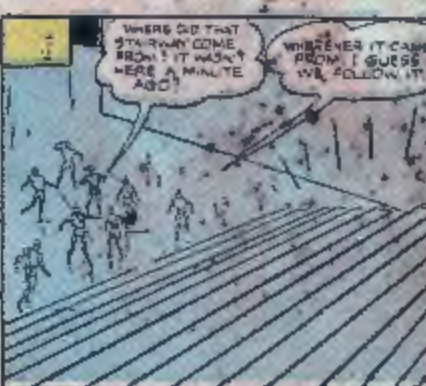


AND THEN, UNEXPECTEDLY, THE ICE DISAPPEARS! A WARM BREEZE SPRINGS UP...

HUH...? WHAT'S THAT CITY DOING DOWN THERE?

THAT IS THE CAPITAL OF WISSTARK! RADIOACTIVE MINERALS UNDERNEATH GIVE OFF HEAT, AND PREVENT THE ICE FROM FORMING! BUT YOU SHALL LEARN MORE LATER! NOW MUST WE LAND!

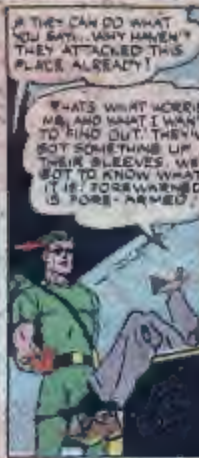




AS THE ATTENDANTS REPORT, THE GIVEN SOLDIERS ARE STUNNED BY A GREATER SHOCK THAN ANY THEY HAVE YET RECEIVED!



"STANOVIA IS ANOTHER WALLED TOWN, THUS SEPARATED FROM US BY A MOUNTAIN RANGE..."



the STAR-SPANGLED KID

CHAPTER 2



"THE BIGGER THEY ARE, THE HARDER THEY FALL"... SO THINK THE ALL-AMERICAN AVENGERS AS THEY SEEK GARGANTUAN AID... ONLY TO LEARN THAT THE SMALLER THEY ARE, THE HARDER THEY HIT! FOR A GIGANTIC SURPRISE ALWAYS THE COMRADES IN COMBAT AT THE HANDS OF A MULTITUDE OF MIGHTY MITEs! AND WHEN ONE PERIL FOLLOWS ANOTHER, THE SIGHT OF THE STAR-SPANGLED KID FIDDLING WITH HIS CAMERA MAKES STRIPESY BURN UP...UNTIL HE LEARNS THAT THE KID HAS A PLAN TO SET THE WORLD ON FIRE AS THEY FIGHT THEIR WAY OUT OF THE...

"LAND OF GIANTS!"

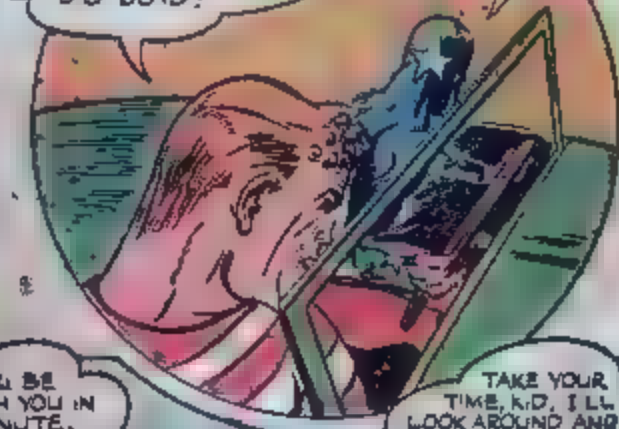
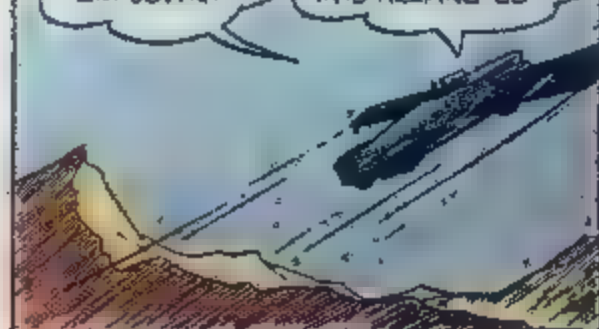
IN THE STAR-ROCKET RACER, THE ALL-AMERICAN DUO ZOOMS TOWARD THE MYSTERIOUS LAND OF THE GIANTS...

KID, EITHER THEM GIANTS SEE THINGS OUR WAY, OR WE MOW 'EM DOWN!

MOWING THEM DOWN S OUT, STRIPESY! THEY'RE TOO BIG! BUT I MIGHT BE ABLE TO TALK THEM INTO HELPING US!

OKAY, KID, BUT WHY'D YOU BRING ALONG THE WIZARD'S MOVIN' PITCHER MACHINE, AND THAT OTHER STUFF? WE AIN'T GONNA PUT ON NO SHOW FOR THEM BIG BOYS!

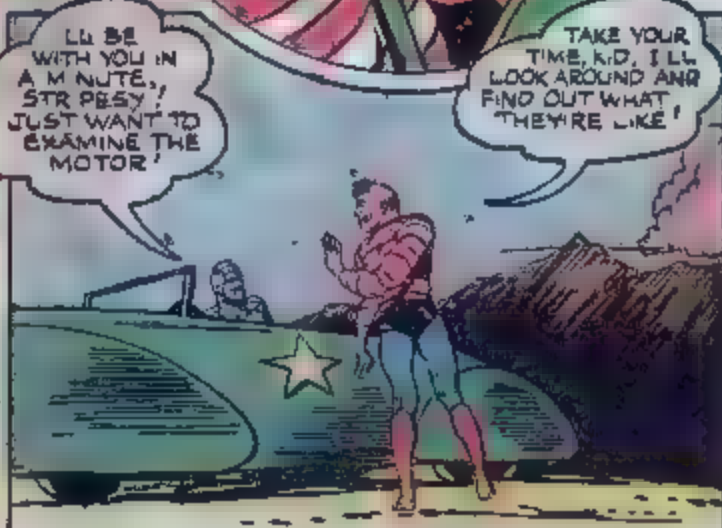
I'VE GOT A USE FOR THEM. BUT HOLD ON... THIS MAY BE THE PLACE WE'RE LOOKING FOR...



WE'RE SO HIGH UP THAT EVEN GIANTS SEEM AS SMALL AS ANTS! BETTER MAKE A LANDING AND INVESTIGATE!

LL BE WITH YOU IN A MINUTE, STRIPESY! JUST WANT TO EXAMINE THE MOTOR!

TAKE YOUR TIME, KID, I'LL LOOK AROUND AND FIND OUT WHAT THEY'RE LIKE!

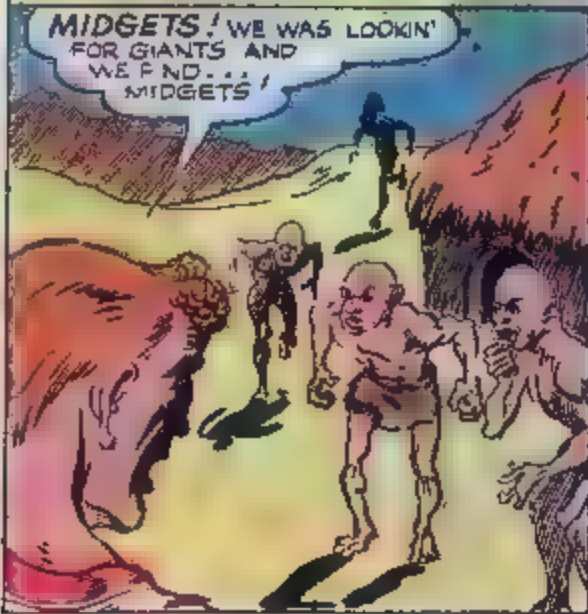


SECONDS LATER, STRIPESY'S EYES POP WITH ASTONISHMENT...

MIDGETS! WE WAS LOOKIN' FOR GIANTS AND WE FND... MIDGETS!

BE CAREFUL! THIS S ONE OF THE GIANTS! HE KILLS PEOPLE!

HO HO. THEY THINK I'M A GIANT! WAIT TLL I TELL TH S TO THE KID!



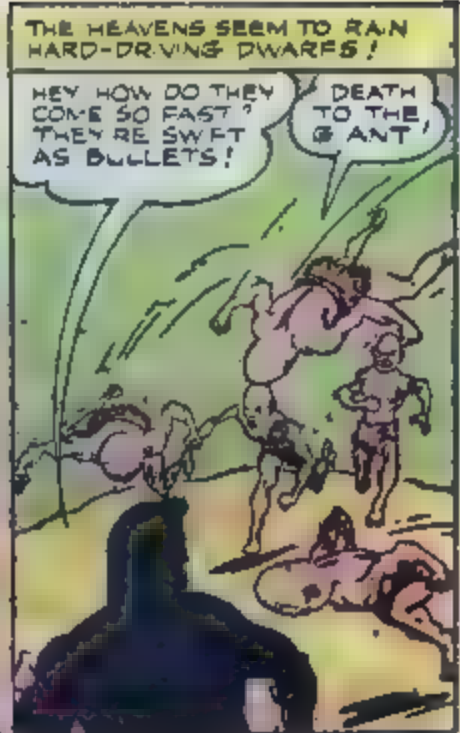


DON'T GET TOO CLOSE TO THE GANT!

THEY'RE SCARED O' ME! GUESS I DO LOOK PRETTY TOUGH AT THAT!



OWWW!!! WHERE'D THIS GUY COME FROM?



THE HEAVENS SEEM TO RAIN HARD-DRIVING DWARFS!

HEY HOW DO THEY COME SO FAST? THEY'RE SWIFT AS BULLETS!

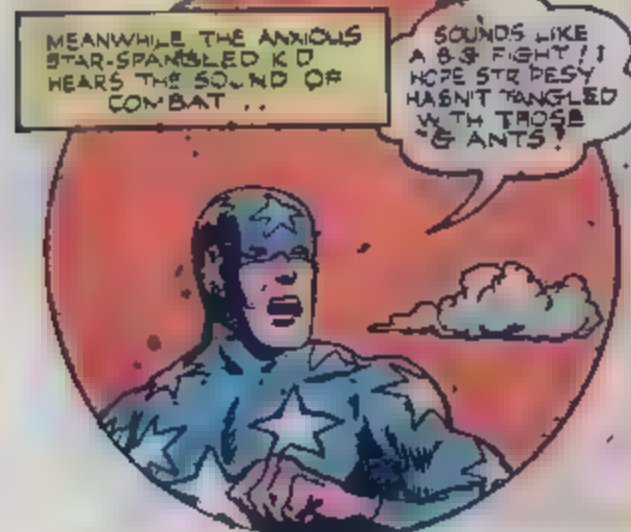
DEATH TO THE GANT!



OUR HEADS ARE HARDER THAN HIS STOMACH!

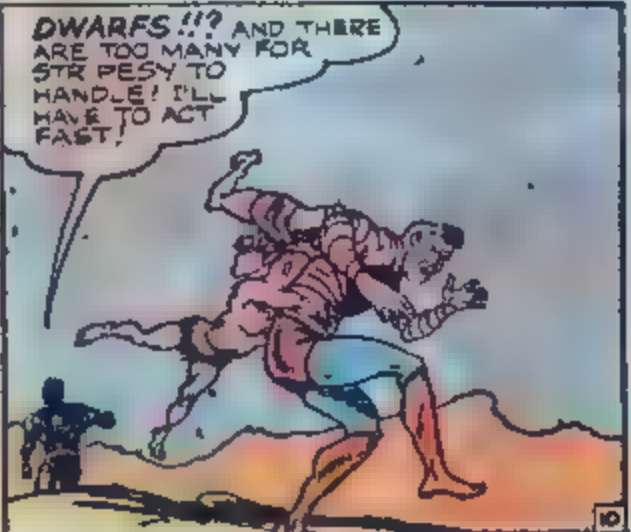
A LITTLE LOWER! THE GANT IS WEAKENING!

PROPELLED BY A CLEVERLY-DESIGNED CATAPULT TOUGH HUMAN MISSILES SA L TOWARD A BAFFLED TARGET...



MEANWHILE THE ANXIOUS STAR-SPANGLED KID HEARS THE SOUND OF COMBAT...

SOUNDS LIKE A B-S FIGHT!! I HOPE STR PSEY HASN'T TANGLED WITH THOSE GANTS!



DWARFS!!! AND THERE ARE TOO MANY FOR STR PSEY TO HANDLE! I'LL HAVE TO ACT FAST!

PRESENTLY, THE ROAR OF A ROUGH VOICE STARTLES THE FURIOUS BATTLEERS...

THE DWARFS ARE IN OUR TRAP! DO NOT LET THEM ESCAPE!

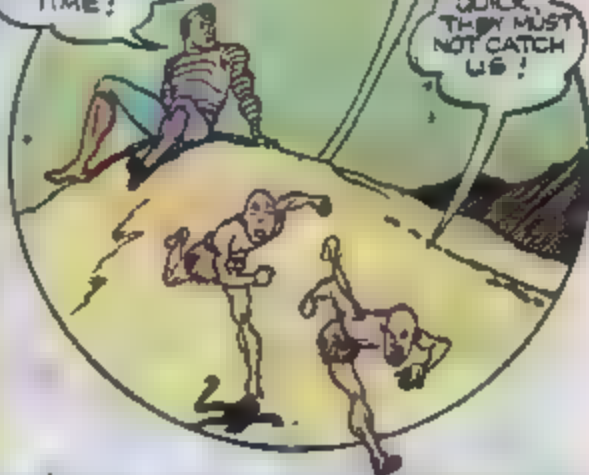
THE OTHER GIANTS HAVE COME!



MORE TROUBLE FROM THE 'REAL' GIANTS, THIS TIME!

AFTER THEM!

QUICK, THEY MUST NOT CATCH US!



BUT AS THE MINATURE MEN FLEE THE SCENE OF BATTLE

WE BETTER GET SET, KID. THEM GIANTS S TUGH BABIES! THEY'RE KILLERS!

HOLD ONTO YOUR SHIRT, STRIPESY! THERE AREN'T ANY GIANTS AROUND!



I JUST MADE A BIG NOISE WITH THIS MEGAPHONE! IT'S ONE OF THE THINGS I BROUGHT ALONG FOR AN EMERGENCY.

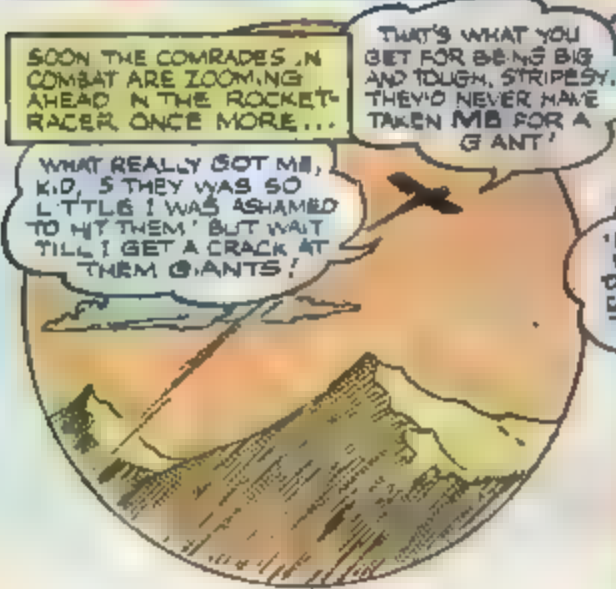
YOU SURE HAD ME FOOLED.



SOON THE COMRADES IN COMBAT ARE ZOOMING AHEAD IN THE ROCKET-RACER, ONCE MORE...

WHAT REALLY GOT ME, KID, S THEY WAS SO LITTLE! I WAS ASHAMED TO HIT THEM! BUT WAIT TILL I GET A CRACK AT THEM GIANTS!

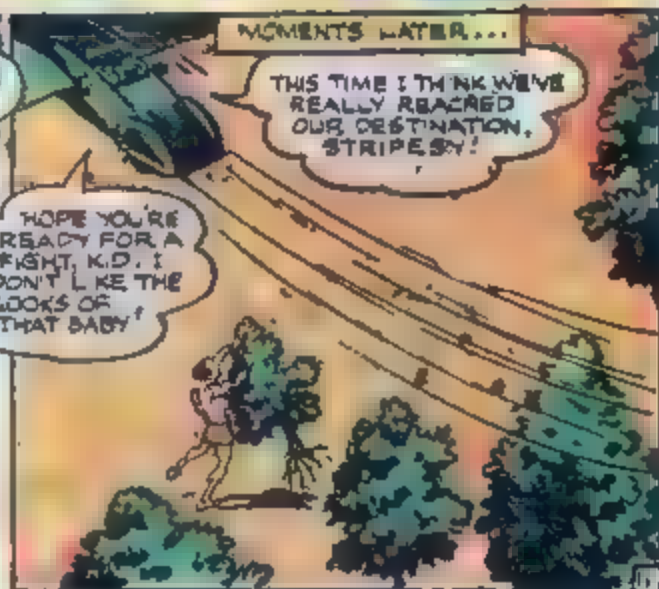
THAT'S WHAT YOU GET FOR BEING BIG AND TOUGH, STRIPESY. THEY'D NEVER HAVE TAKEN ME FOR A GIANT!



MOMENTS LATER...

THIS TIME I THINK WE'VE REALLY REACHED OUR DESTINATION, STRIPESY!

HOPE YOU'RE 'READY FOR A FIGHT, KID. I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THAT BABY!



SKILLED HANDS PILOT THE SUPER-SWIFT GRAFT TO A SHOCKLESS LANDING...

HEY KID, WHY'D YOU PUT THE RACER DOWN HERE? WE GOTTA CROSS THAT YELLOW HILL TO GET TO THEM GIANTS!

TO RATHER HAVE THAT YELLOW HILL BETWEEN THEM AND THE RACER! IT MAY COME N HANDY. COME ON I WANT TO TALK WITH THEM!

BUT TALKING DOESN'T SEEM TO DO MUCH GOOD...

NOW, LISTEN... I TELL YOU, WE NEED YOUR HELP -

WE WILL NOT FIGHT FOR THE WIZARD! WE FIGHT ONLY FOR OURSELVES!

DO NOT LIKE VISITORS WE SLAY THOSE WHO COME TO US UN INVITED.

AND WE

THE SOUND OF A SCRAPING FOOT... AND THE STAR-SPANGLED KID SIDESTEPS A TREACHEROUS BLOW FROM BEHIND.

SEEMS LIKE THEY REALLY DON'T LIKE L.S. STRIPES!

POWERFUL MUSCLES SLAM A ROCK-HARD FIST INTO A TARGET TOO HUGE TO BE MISSED!

UGH!!!

YEAH... AND I'M SORRY NOT TO LIKE THEM EITHER, KID!

I AMN'T BIG ENOUGH TO HIT YA IN THE JAW... BUT MAYBE THAT'LL CUT YA DOWN TO MY SIZE!

I THOUGHT SO THANKS FOR SPOOPIN', STUPID!

ARRRGH!!!

AS A PAIR OF LUMBERING MAN-MONSTERS PLUNGE TOWARD THE ALL-AMERICAN DUO...

ALL SET, STRIPES? THE SIGNAL IS K55...

GOTCHA KID!

GIANT TOES FEEL
THE CRUSHING
IMPACT OF THE
CONRADES IN
COMBAT

WE'LL TEACH THESE
FELLOWS TO TOE
THE LINE
STRAPSY!

OWWWW

I DUNNO
XD. I
STILL
THINK
THEY WANTA
SHOE ALL
S TDS
AWAY

HOL DAA
FIGHTIN'
ABOUTN
ABUY YOUR
SIZE, CHUM?

ARRR

WE SURE WARRD
YD SOVET-NO
D'G JUST NOW.
XD!

NEVER
MIND THEM,
HERE'S
ANOTHER
WAR
672..

DON'T YA KNOW
TANT POLITE TO
TURN YOUR BACK?

SHOW 'EM A HALF-
NE-SON THE WAY
ENLY POST
WOULD DO T.
STRAPSY!

A TOTTERING GIANT TUMBLES TO THE
GROUND

I HAD A TOUGH TIME
WITH THIS BABY!

AND AMID THE CLAMOR OF COMBAT THE
STAR-SPANGLED XD STANDS COOLLY...

HOLD THAT
POSE,
XD-S, IT'S
PERFECT!

HEY! THIS AN'T
NO TIME TO TAKE
PITCHERS,
XD!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT GOT NTA YA KID! TAKIN' TIME OFF N THE MIDDLE OF A FIGHT TO GET A BUNCH OF UGLY MUGGS ONTO YOUR FILM.

THOSE MUGGS ARE UNIQUE STRIPESY! THAT'S WHY I WANTED THEM. I'D LIKE TO GET A FEW MORE SHOTS!

HURRY, K.D! THEM GIANTS CAN'T SPRINT, BUT THEY KEEP RIGHT ON GOIN' N A LONG RACE THEY MIGHT CATCH US!

THIS YELLOW HILL WE'RE ON WILL PROTECT US, STRIPESY!

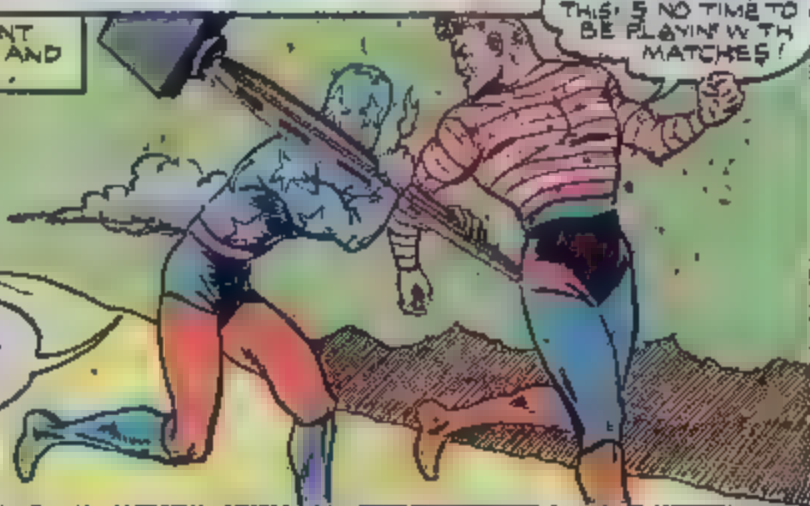
HUH? THAT DON'T MAKE SENSE EITHER! I WONDER IF THE K.D'S GETTIN' WEAK N THE HEAD?



A SWIFT SPRINT DOWNWARD, AND THEN...



HOLD IT A MINUTE, STRIPESY I WANT A GOOD LIGHT!



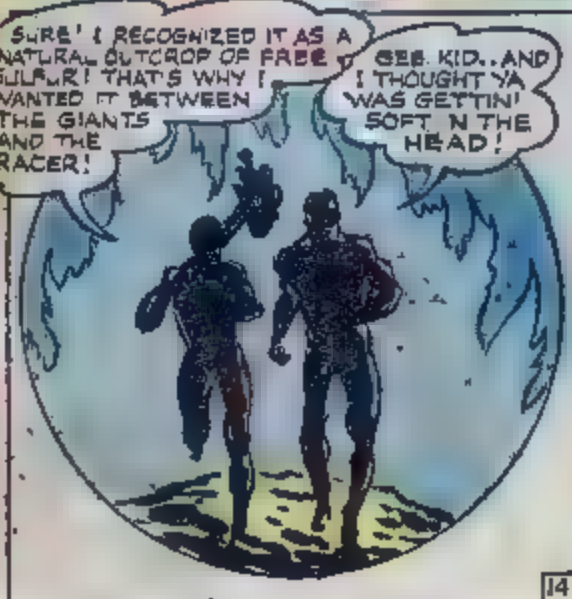
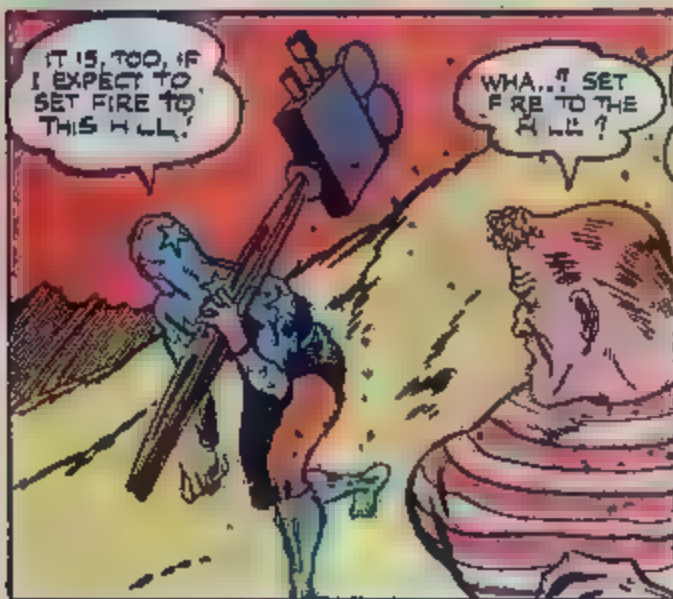
I KNOW YA AIN'T GROWN-UP, K.D, BUT THIS IS NO TIME TO BE PLAYIN' WITH MATCHES!

IT IS, TOO, IF I EXPECT TO SET FIRE TO THIS HILL!

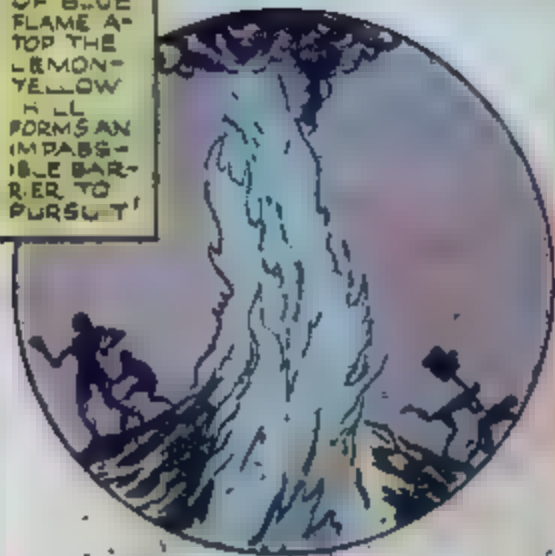
WHA...? SET FIRE TO THE HILL?

SURE! I RECOGNIZED IT AS A NATURAL OUTCROP OF FREE SULFUR! THAT'S WHY I WANTED IT BETWEEN THE GIANTS AND THE RACER!

GEE KID..AND I THOUGHT YA WAS GETTIN' SOFT N THE HEAD!



A PILLAR OF BLUE FLAME AT THE LEMON-YELLOW HILL FORMS AN IMPASSIBLE BARRIER TO PURSUIT!



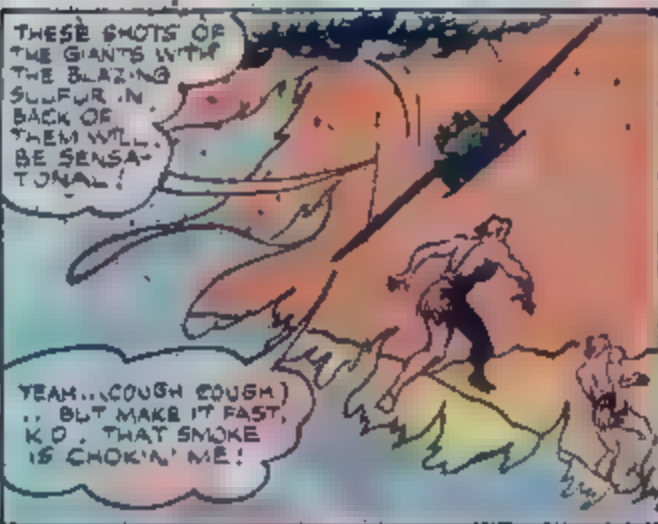
ARE WE LUCKY!!! I'LL BE GLAD TO GET OUT OF HERE AND HEAD FOR HOME!

NOT YET STRIPPY! THERE ARE JUST A FEW MORE PICTURES I LIKE TO TAKE.



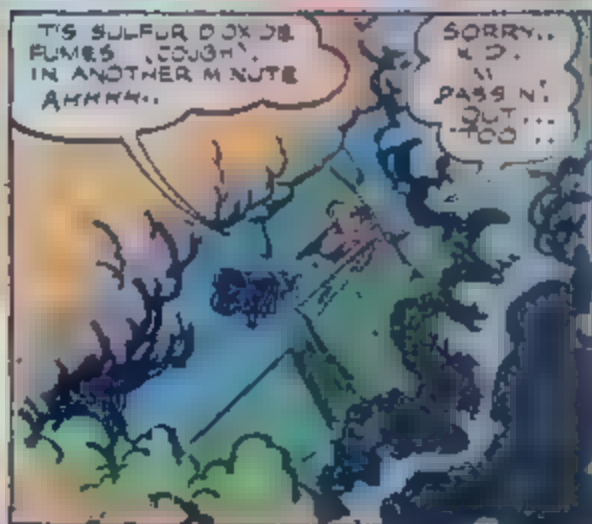
THESE SHOTS OF THE GIANTS WITH THE BLAZING SULFUR IN BACK OF THEM WILL BE SENSATIONAL!

YEAH... (COUGH COUGH) ... BUT MAKE IT FAST, KID. THAT SMOKE IS CHOKIN' ME!



IT'S SULFUR DIOXIDE FUMES, COUGH! IN ANOTHER MINUTE AHKKK...

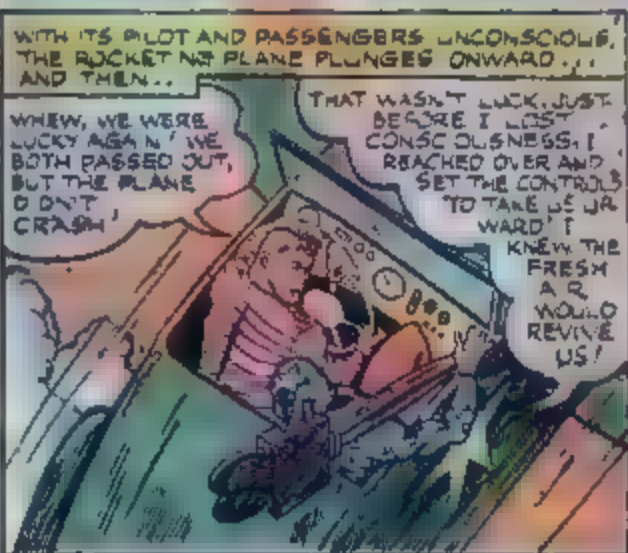
SORRY.. KID.. I'LL PASS N' OUT... TOO...



WITH ITS PILOT AND PASSENGERS UNCONSCIOUS, THE ROCKET-NR PLANE PLUNGES ONWARD... AND THEN...

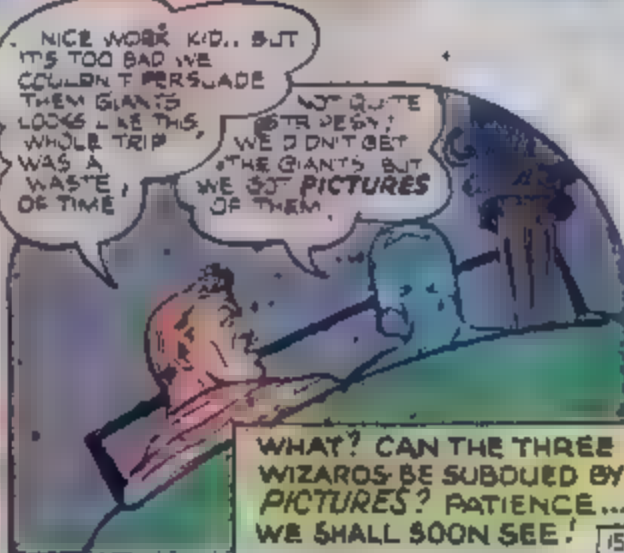
WHEW, WE WERE LUCKY AGAIN! WE BOTH PASSED OUT, BUT THE PLANE DIDN'T CRASH!

THAT WASN'T LUCK, JUST BECAUSE I LOST CONSCIOUSNESS. I REACHED OVER AND SET THE CONTROLS TO TAKE US FORWARD! I KNEW THE FRESH AIR WOULD REVIVE US!



NICE WORK KID.. BUT IT'S TOO BAD WE COULDN'T PERSUADE THEM GIANTS LOOKS LIKE THIS WHOLE TRIP WAS A WASTE OF TIME.

NOT QUITE STRIPPY! WE DIDN'T GET THE GIANTS BUT WE GOT PICTURES OF THEM.



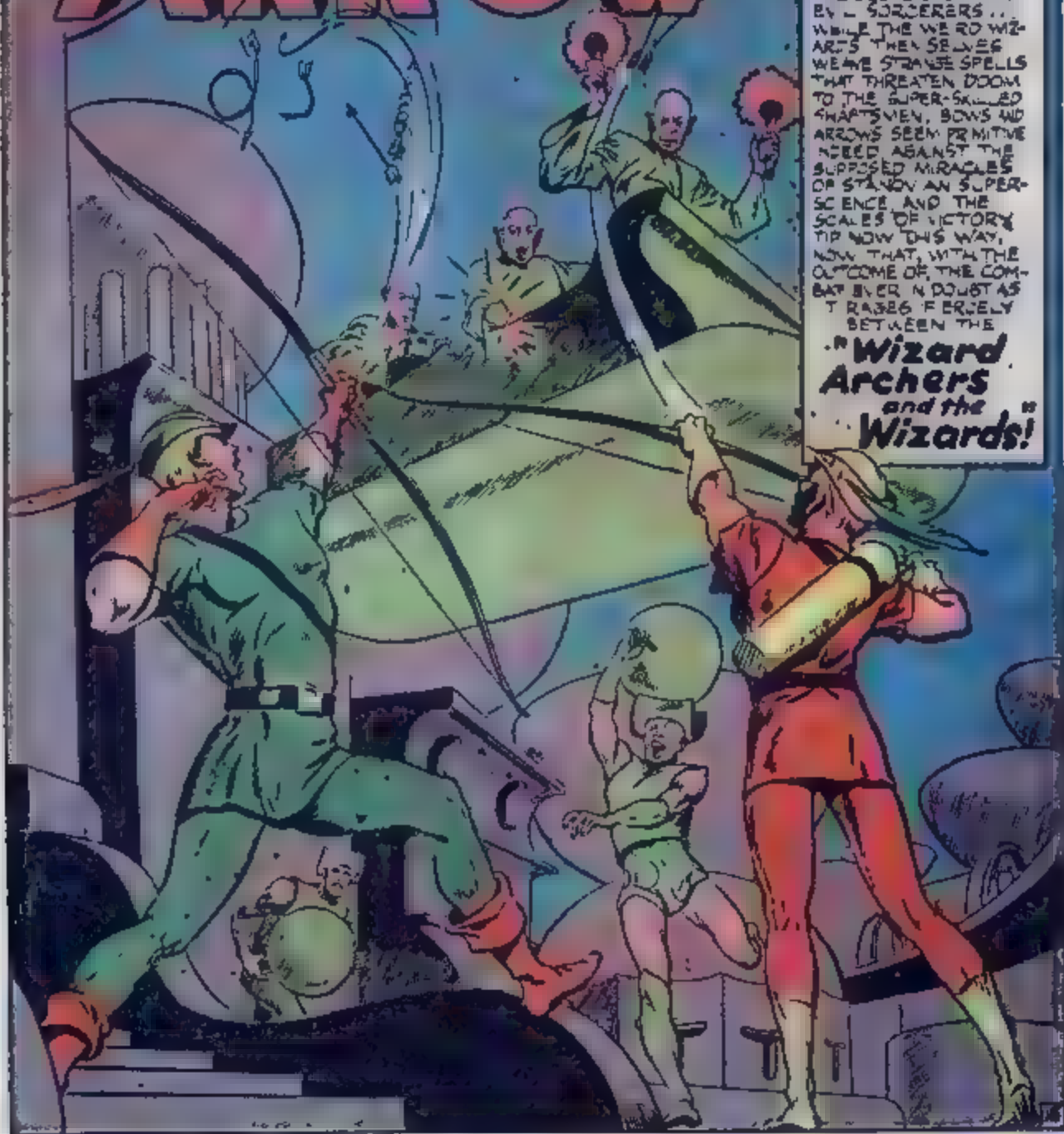
WHAT? CAN THE THREE WIZARDS BE SUBDUED BY PICTURES? PATIENCE... WE SHALL SOON SEE!

THE GREEN ARROW

CHAPTER 3

CAPTURED INTO A STRANGE LAND THE GREEN ARROW AND SPEEDY SEEK TO LEARN THE SECRETS OF THE EVIL SORCERERS... WHILE THE WIZARD WIZARDS THEN SELVES WEAVE STRANGE SPELLS THAT THREATEN DOOM TO THE SUPER-SKILLED SHAPESMEN, BOWS AND ARROWS SEEM PRIMITIVE NEED AGAINST THE SUPPOSED MIRACLES OF STAVES AND SUPER-SCIENCE, AND THE SCALES OF VICTORY TIP NOW THIS WAY, NOW THAT, WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE COMBAT EVER IN DOUBT AS IT RAGES FERCELY BETWEEN THE

**"Wizard
Archers
and the
Wizards!"**



OUTSIDE THE WALLED CITY OF STANOVIA, THE GREEN ARROW AND SPEEDY PREPARE TO PUT THEIR WITS AGAINST THE THREE WIZARDS...

WONDER WHAT WE'LL RUN INTO, G.A. MAYBE THEY ARE REAL WIZARDS!

WE'LL SOON FIND OUT! READY FOR THE CATAPULT?

MMM... WE'VE GOT AN AUDIENCE, BETTER DO SOME FAST TALKING—OR WE'LL GET A LITTLE MORE ATTENTION THAN WE WANT!

BE THESE STRANGERS BIRDS? METHOUGHT I SAW THEM FLYING!

THE TOUCH OF A BUTTON RELEASES A POWERFUL SPRING INSIDE THE ARROWPLANE... AND TWO FIGURES HURTLE UPWARD!

UP AND OVER, THE EASY WAY TO GET PAST THOSE GUARDS ON THE WALLS!

HARD LANDING, THOUGH. WE OUGHT TO CARRY HAYSTACKS AS PART OF OUR EQUIPMENT!

WE CAN FLY BECAUSE WE ARE FRIENDS OF THE THREE WIZARDS!

CAREFUL, G.A. DON'T TALK US INTO TROUBLE!

BUT AT MENTION OF THEIR RULERS...

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY SPEEDY. THESE PEOPLE RESPECT ANYBODY WHO KNOWS THEIR BIG SHOTS.

IT CERTAINLY LOOKS THAT WAY!

SUDDENLY, A CONCATENATION OF CACOPHONOUS SOUNDS ASSAULTS THE EAR!

SOUNDS LIKE A TERRIFIC FIGHT GOING ON!

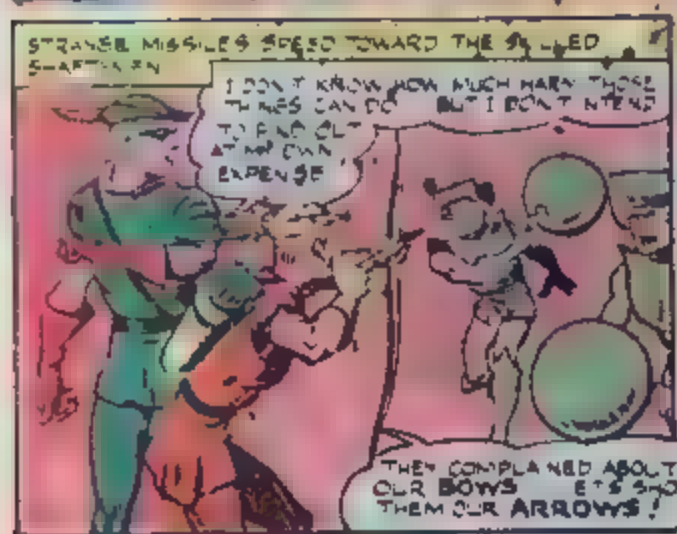
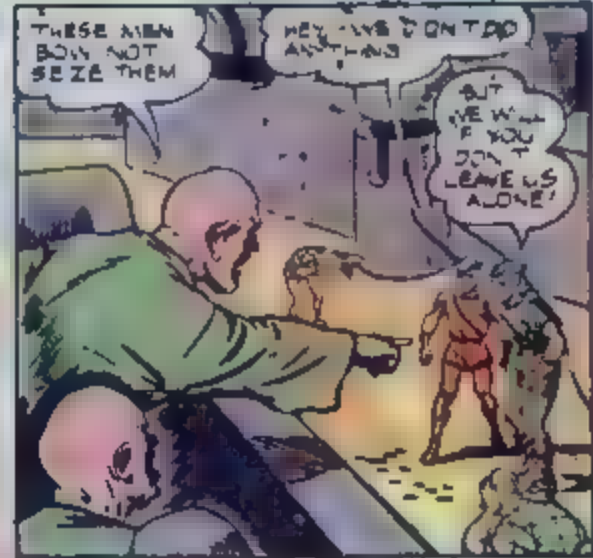
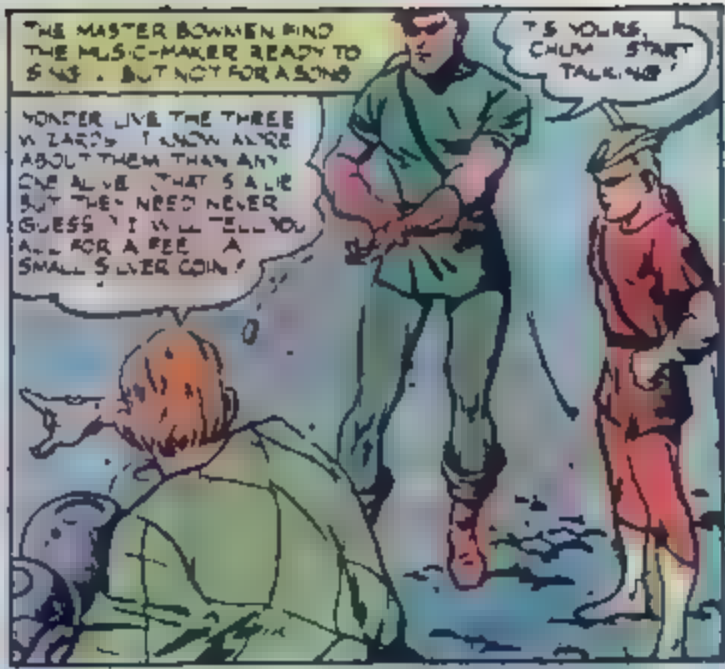
WE'RE HERE TO LEARN AS MUCH AS WE CAN ABOUT STANOVIA; LET'S GO, SEE!

HUH... NO FIGHT?

THIS MAN'S EVIDENTLY A STANOVIAN MUSICIAN, SPEEDY POUNDING ON THOSE THINGS MUST BE THESE PEOPLE'S IDEA OF MAKING MUSIC!

CRASH!
BANG!

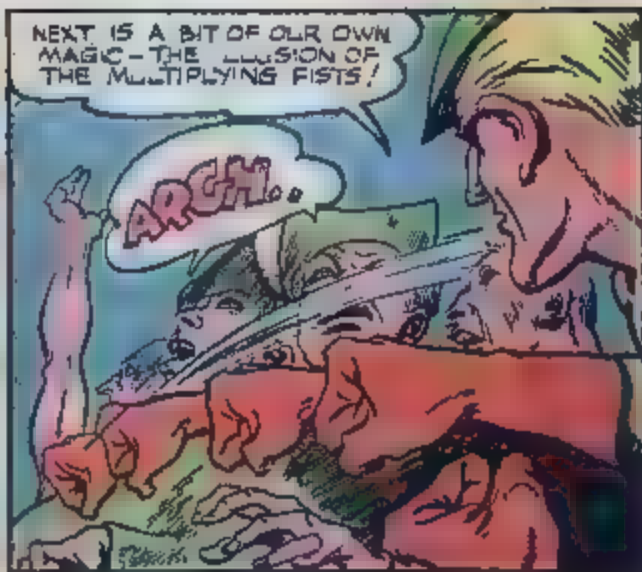
CRASH!



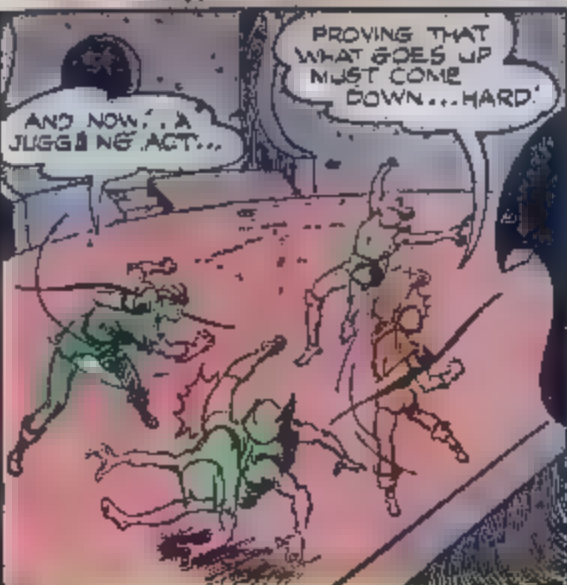
FIRST A SONG, I'M FALLING NEAT, BUT NOT
HEAD OVER HEELS FOR YOU!
GALDY! WHAT
NEXT, G.A.?



NEXT IS A BIT OF OUR OWN
MAGIC - THE ILLUSION OF
THE MULTIPLYING FISTS!



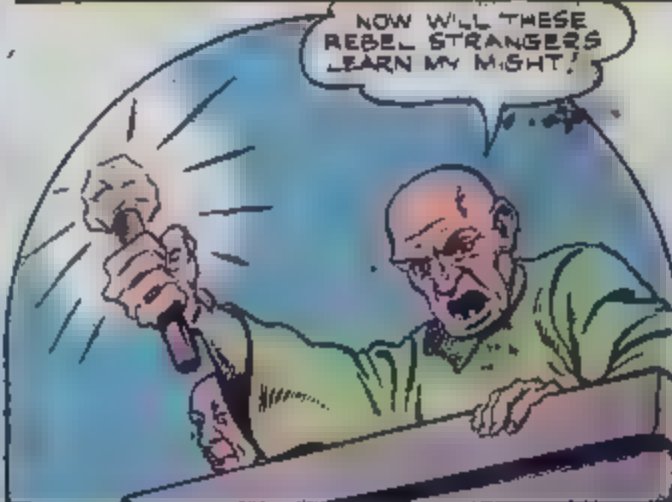
AND NOW... A
JUGGLING ACT...



PROVING THAT
WHAT GOES UP
MUST COME
DOWN... HARD!

BUT AS THE BATTLING COMPANIONS MOW DOWN
THEIR DUMFOUNDED OPPONENTS, ONE OF THE
WIZARDS HOLDS UP A PUZZLING OBJECT...

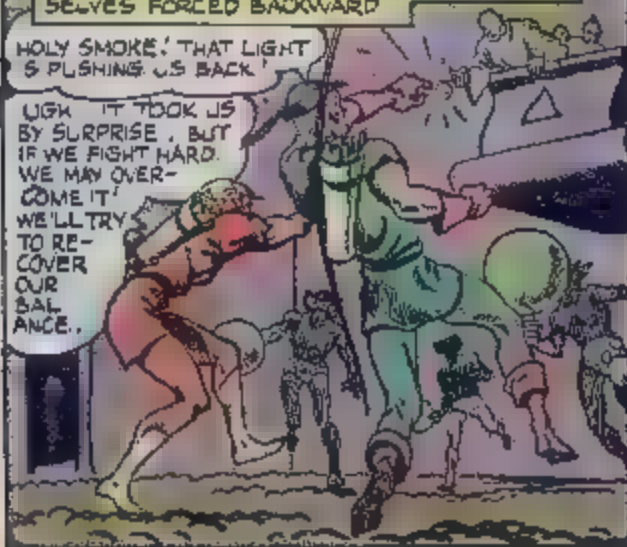
NOW WILL THESE
REBEL STRANGERS
LEARN MY MIGHT!



THOUGH THE ASTONISHED ARCHERS STRAIN
FORWARD FURIOUSLY, THEY FIND THEM-
SELVES FORCED BACKWARD

HOLY SMOKE! THAT LIGHT
IS PUSHING US BACK!

UGH! IT TOOK US
BY SURPRISE, BUT
IF WE FIGHT HARD,
WE MAY OVER-
COME IT! WE'LL TRY
TO RE-
COVER
OUR BAL-
ANCE.



BUT, NEXT MOMENT...

IF WE HAD JUST A
SECOND MORE, TO
LET US STRAIGHTEN
UP, THEY'D NEVER
HAVE DONE THIS TO
US!



I'M AFRAID WE'RE GOING TO REGRET THAT
SECOND, MORE AND MORE DURING THE
NEXT FEW HOURS, SPEEDY!

PRESENTLY

THIS IS A STRANGE PRISON & A NO BARS ABOUT EVERY TIME I TRY TO CLIMB THESE DES, I S-L-P, RIGHT DOWN AGAIN.

HMM...

SPEEDY, WE'VE GOT A TRUMP UP OUR SLEEVES. SOMETHING THOSE GUARDS THOUGHT TOO PRIMITIVE TO BOTHER WITH...

OUR BOWS AND ARROWS!

BUT DON'T FORGET G.I.A... WE'RE GUARDED!

I'M NOT FORGETTING THAT SOLDIER UP THERE'S GOING TO HELP US ESCAPE.

A SLENDER SHAFT TRAILS AN ARROWLINE TOWARD THE STARTLED SOLDIER...

WHAAA-?

MAYBE WE'LL FIND OUT WHY THEY HAVEN'T ATTACKED WIS-TARK YET WOULD THANK TO BE A CINCH WITH ALL THEIR TRICKS

THE GUARD FEAR-STRICKEN BREAKS INTO A PANICKY RUN

YOU'RE LIGHT ENOUGH SPEEDY FOR HIM TO BEAR YOUR WEIGHT UP. QUICK BEFORE HE RECOVERS HIS WITS ENOUGH TO REMOVE THAT ARROW

UP I GO I'LL DROP YOU A LINE SOON I GET OUT

MOMENTS LATER

NOW TO THAT TOWER THE WIZARDS WON'T BE EXPECTING US AND WE'LL HAVE A BETTER CHANCE TO LEARN THEIR PLANS

SOON, AT THE FOOT OF THE SORCERER'S TOWER...

NO GUARDS OUT HERE... THE WIZARDS MUST THINK THEY'RE SAFE WAY UP THERE!

THEY'LL LEARN BETTER! WE'LL ANCHOR THIS ARROWLINE IN THE ROOF OF THE TOWER AND CLIMB UP!

FULL WELL DO WE KNOW THE WEAK SPOTS OF WISSTARK... BUT ATTACK WE CANNOT UNTIL WE ONCE MORE HAVE THE SHIP

THEY MUST BE REFERRING TO THE SHIP WE CAME IN!

YES... QUIET, SPEEDY!

MANY YEARS DID IVE SPEND BUILDING THE GREAT VESSEL THE ONLY ONE OF ITS KIND, ONLY TO HAVE THE WIZARD OF WISSTARK STEAL IT FROM US BY HIS MAGIC!

WE'LL HAVE TO WARN OUR OWN WIZARD ABOUT THAT

ALSO MUST WE SECURE THE WIZARD HIMSELF! ELSE WILL HIS MAGIC BRING OUR PLANS TO NOTHING!

HEAR THAT, G.A.? AND THEY INTEND TO KIDNAP HIM... PER-HEAR THAT, G.A.? THEY THINK OUR WIZARD'S MAGIC IS REAL, G.A.!

MAYBE WE CAN TAKE THEM PRISONER AND TAKE THEM BACK TO WISSTARK WITH US!

THAT WOULD BE SWINGING THEM A DOVE FOR THE BOWN MEDICINE, I'M FOR IT, G.A.!

BUT SOON IT WILL BE BACK MY PLAN TO RECOVER IT HAS BEEN CONCEIVED, AND IS EVEN NOW BEING EXECUTED

SWIFTING ACTION TO WORDS, A WHIZZING ARROW PUNCTUATES A WIZARD'S SENTENCE...

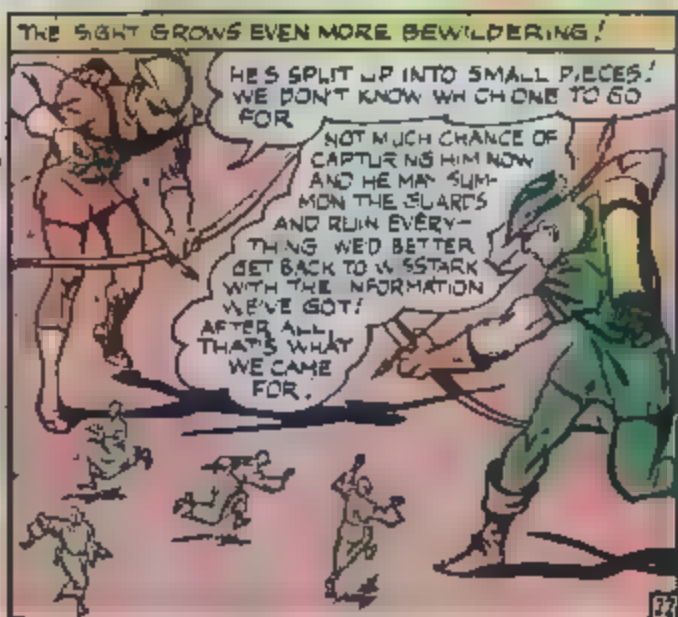
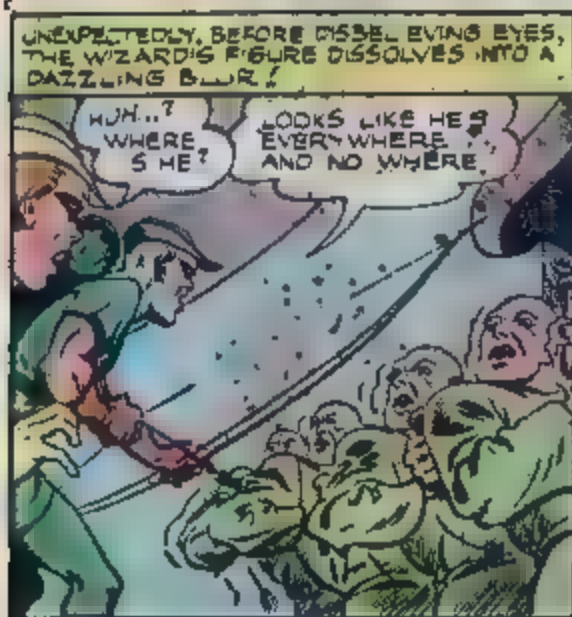
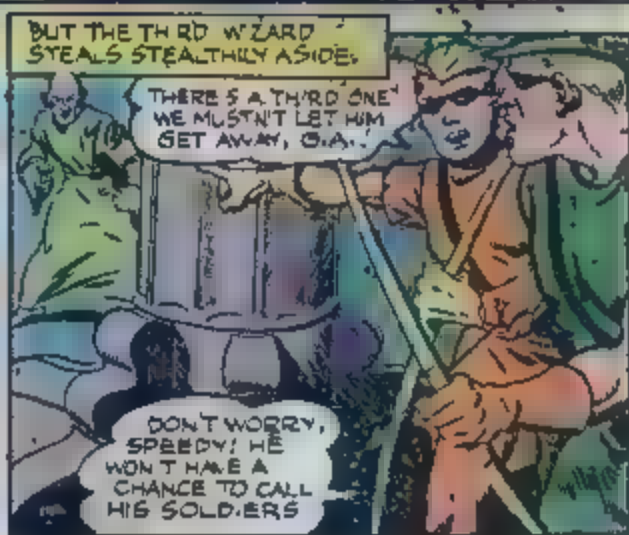
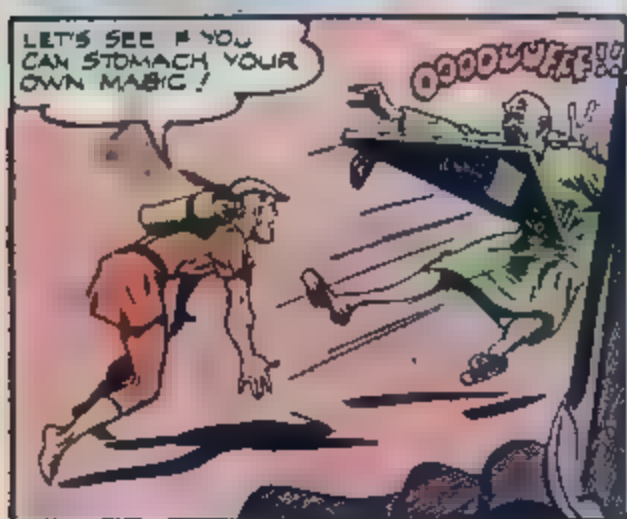
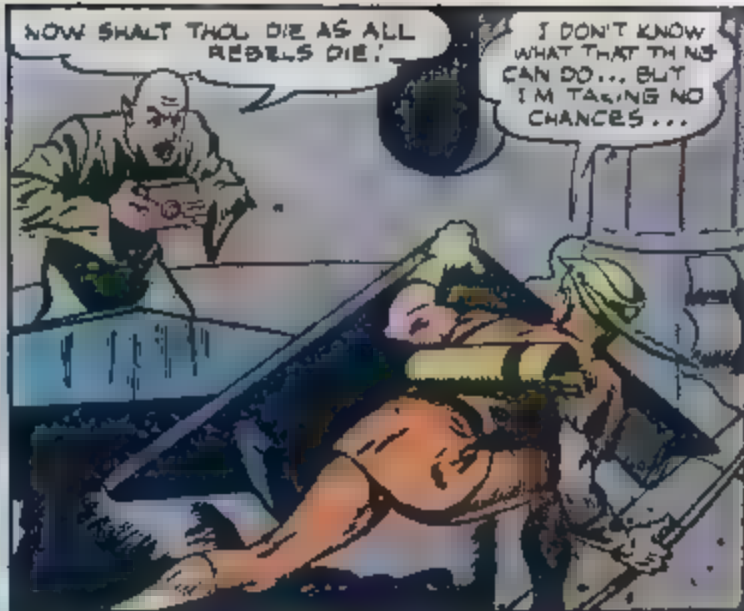
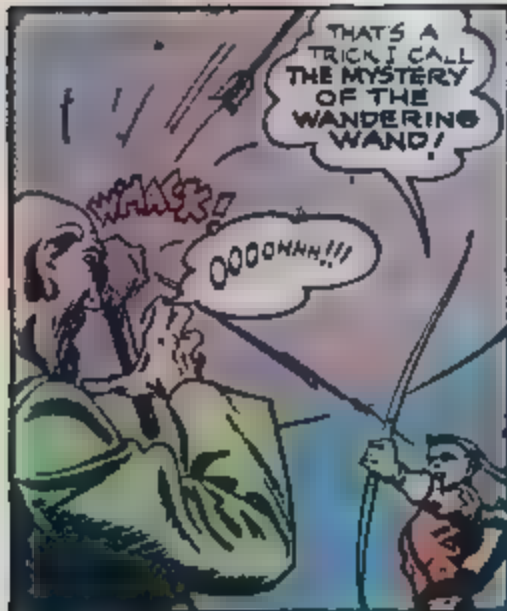
WITH THE WIZARD OUR CAPTIVE, WE SHALL HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR... WHA...?

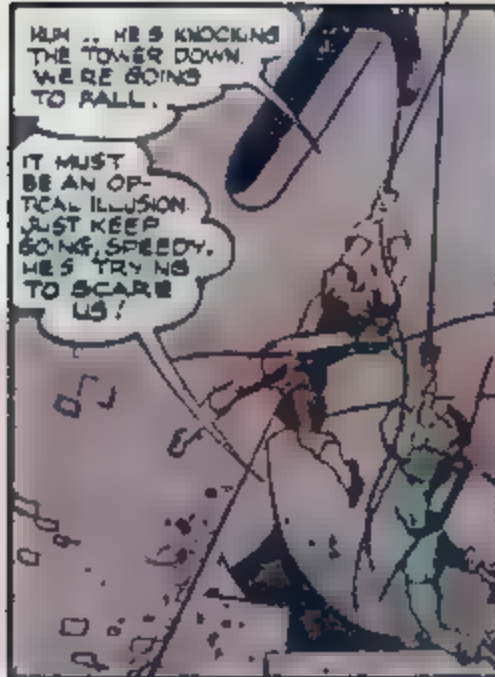
SORRY TO INTERRUPT, PAL... YOU'LL HAVE TO CHANGE THOSE PLANS OF YOURS. YOU'RE COMING WITH US - WE HOPE!

DON'T STOP TO PACK YOUR VALISE NEITHER. WE'LL SUPPLY YOU WITH EVERYTHING YOU NEED.

VILE WRETCHES! THIS TIME THE PENALTY FOR THY DISRESPECT IS... DEATH!

SAYS YOU! NO WACKY WIZARD IS GOING TO SCARE US!





HE'S KNOCKING THE TOWER DOWN. WE'RE GOING TO FALL.

IT MUST BE AN OPTICAL ILLUSION. JUST KEEP GOING, SPEEDY. HE'S TRYING TO SCARE US!



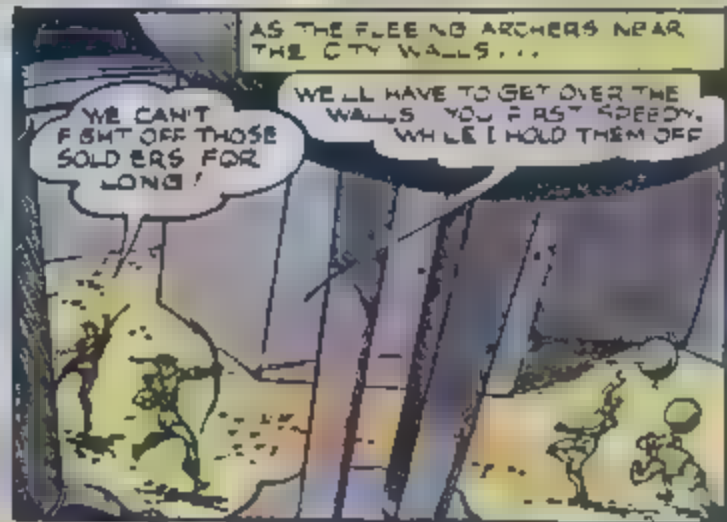
OOOHHH... I'M SINKING THROUGH THE GROUND. WE BETTER STOP.

THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THEY WANT US TO DO. KEEP GOING, SPEEDY.



RUN EXACTLY AS YOU DID BEFORE. THE GROUND'S UNCHANGED. THIS IS JUST ANOTHER ILLUSION!

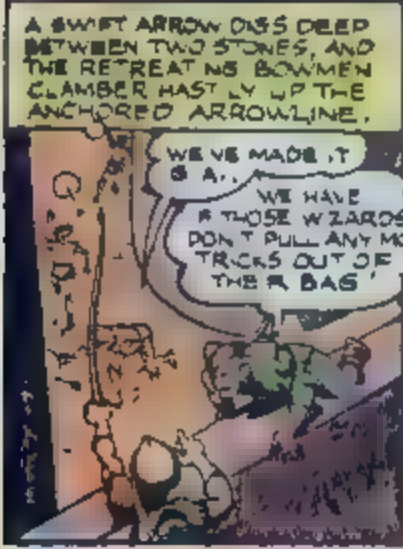
IT HAD ME FOOLED, G.A.



AS THE FLEEING ARCHERS NEAR THE CITY WALLS...

WE CAN'T FIGHT OFF THOSE SOLDIERS FOR LONG!

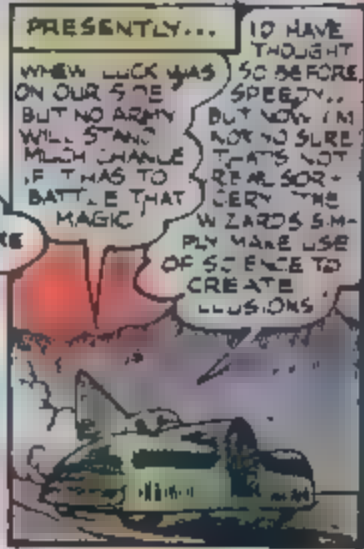
WE'LL HAVE TO GET OVER THE WALLS. YOU FIRST, SPEEDY. WHILE I HOLD THEM OFF.



A SWIFT ARROW DIPS DEEP BETWEEN TWO STONES, AND THE RETREATING BOWMEN CLAMBER HASTILY UP THE ANCHORED ARROWLINE.

WE'VE MADE IT, G.A.

WE HAVE IF THOSE WIZARDS DON'T PULL ANY MORE TRICKS OUT OF THEIR BAGS.

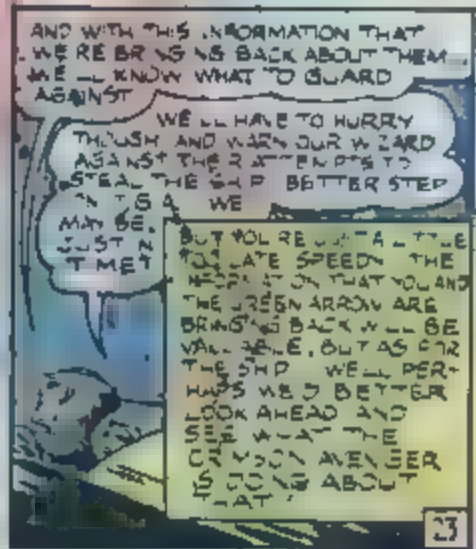


PRESENTLY...

WHEN LUCK WAS ON OUR SIDE BUT NO ARMY WILL STAND MUCH CHANCE IF THAT'S TO BATTLE THAT MAGIC.

TO HAVE THOUGHT SO BEFORE, SPEEDY...

BUT NOW I'M NOT SO SURE THAT'S NOT REAL. SORCERY THE WIZARDS SIMPLY MAKE USE OF SCIENCE TO CREATE ILLUSIONS.



AND WITH THIS INFORMATION THAT WE'RE BRINGING BACK ABOUT THEM, WE'LL KNOW WHAT TO GUARD AGAINST.

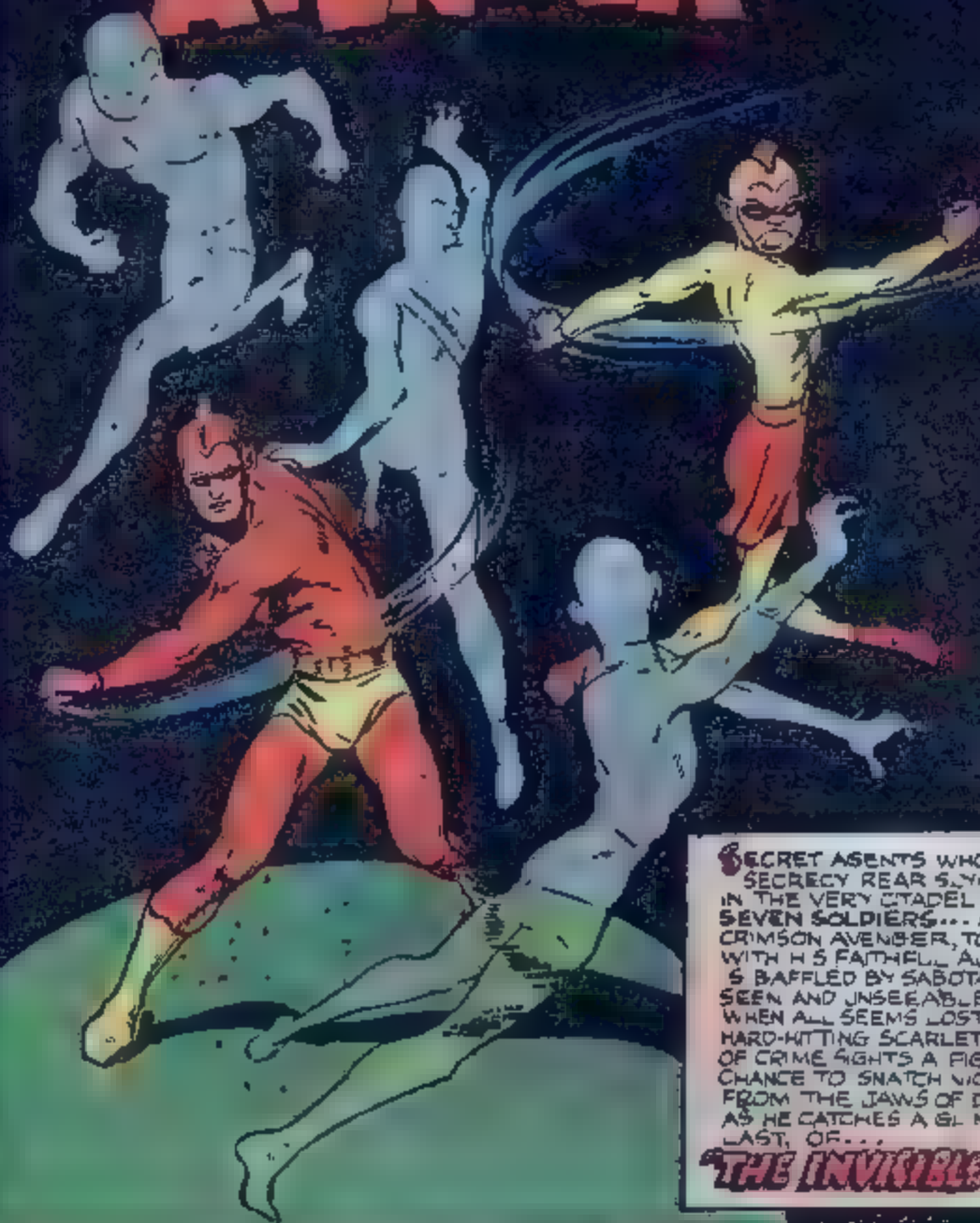
WE'LL HAVE TO HURRY THOUGH AND WARN OUR WIZARD AGAINST THEIR ATTEMPTS TO STEAL THE SHIP. BETTER STEP IN, G.A. WE MAY BE JUST IN TIME!

BUT YOU'RE A LITTLE TOO LATE, SPEEDY! THE NEEDLE IN THAT YOU AND THE GREEN ARROW ARE BRINGING BACK WILL BE VALUABLE, BUT AS FOR THE SHIP, WE'LL PERHAPS WE'D BETTER LOOK AHEAD AND SEE WHAT THE CROWN JEWELER IS SAYING ABOUT THAT.

THE

CHAPTER 4

CRIMSON AVENGER



SECRET AGENTS WHO SCORN
SECRECY REAR SLY HEADS
IN THE VERY CITADEL OF THE
SEVEN SOLDIERS... AND THE
CRIMSON AVENGER, TOGETHER
WITH HIS FAITHFUL ALLY WING
IS BAFLED BY SABOTAGE UN-
SEEN AND UNSEEABLE BUT
WHEN ALL SEEMS LOST, THE
HARD-HITTING SCARLET COURAGE
OF CRIME FIGHTS A FIGHTING
CHANCE TO SNATCH VICTORY
FROM THE JAWS OF DEFEAT
AS HE CATCHES A GLIMPSE, AT
LAST, OF...

"THE INVISIBLE MEN!"

IN THE WALLED CITY OF WISSTAR, THE CRIMINAL MENTRUS-ER AND HIS FATHER, ALBY, WERE, ON THE ALERT FOR FIFTH COLUMN ATTEMPTS HEARD A STRANGE RUMOR.

OUTSIDE THE GREAT GATES

OUR THREE WEAPONS WERE PUT THERE HEARS TOGETHER AND I KEPT A SHOT TO TAKE REVENGE FOR THE WOODEN HORSE OF TROY WARS!

THERE'S FUNNY WORK OUTSIDE THE CITY GATES PAL AND SUE WERE DOING THE LOCAL ROBOT WARRIORS AROUND HERE WE'D BETTER TAKE A LOOK.

ONLY A FEWER THERAPY WAS A GOOD THING YOU FELLOWS CAME TO WISSTAR.

VELLY VELLY FUNNY WORK WHO BLAME WOODEN CON HERE!

SURE ENOUGH SESE WANTS TUES WOODEN HORSE HAVE MEN FOR INSIDE

AND THERE ARE PROBABLY MEN INSIDE THIS WOODEN HORSE THEN EXPECT IT TO BE TAKEN INTO THE CITY JUST LIKE THE TROJANS TOOK THE WOODEN HORSE, THEN COME OUT AND ATTACK BUT WE'LL MAKE SURE THEY COME OUT RIGHT NOW!

PLenty soon I GET PLenty HOT INSIDE

THEN THE MEN WILL JUMP OUT AND WE'LL TAKE THEM PRISONER!

PRESENTLY...

THEY OPEN DOOR BUT NO ONE COME OUT!

I DON'T KNOW I CAN'T MAKE ANY WHY THEY'RE WAITING.

THEN A SUDDEN LOUD CRASH IN THE WATCHING CROWD ATTRACTS THE CRIMINAL MENTRUS-ER'S ATTENTION.

YOUR ARM HAS STRUCK MY FACE.

YOUR FEET HAVE RUINED MY SHOES.

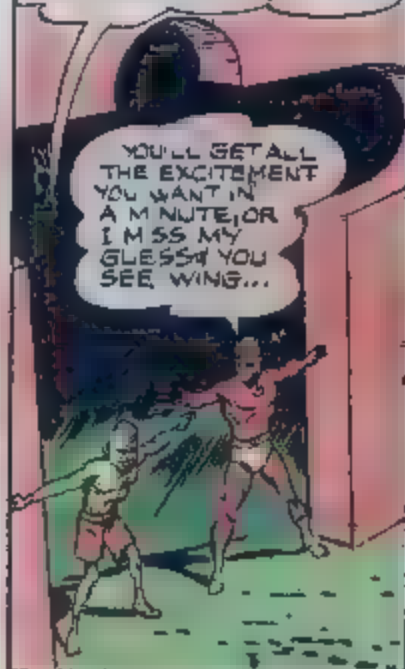
THAT CROWD SEEMS TO HAVE GONE CRAZY.

OW!! MY STOMACH!

NOT A MINUTE TO LOSE.
WING I THINK I KNOW
WHAT'S HAPPENING.
LET'S HEAD FOR THOSE
GATES AND BLOCK THE
PATH INTO THE CITY.



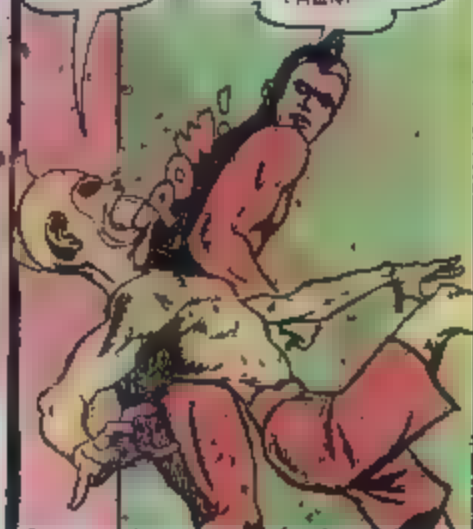
AH, WOE WING NO UNDERSTAND
WHY WE STAY HERE, WHILE
ALL EXCITEMENT OUT FRONT!



YOU'LL GET ALL
THE EXCITEMENT
YOU WANT IN
A MINUTE, OR
I MISS MY
GLESSE! YOU
SEE WING...

OW!
SOMEBODY
HIT WING
ON JAW

SOMEBODY
INVISIBLE!
NO WONDER WE DIDN'T
SEE ANYBODY COME
OUT OF THE DOOR IN
THE COW! THEY
CAME OUT ALL
RIGHT, ONLY WE
COULDN'T SEE
THEM



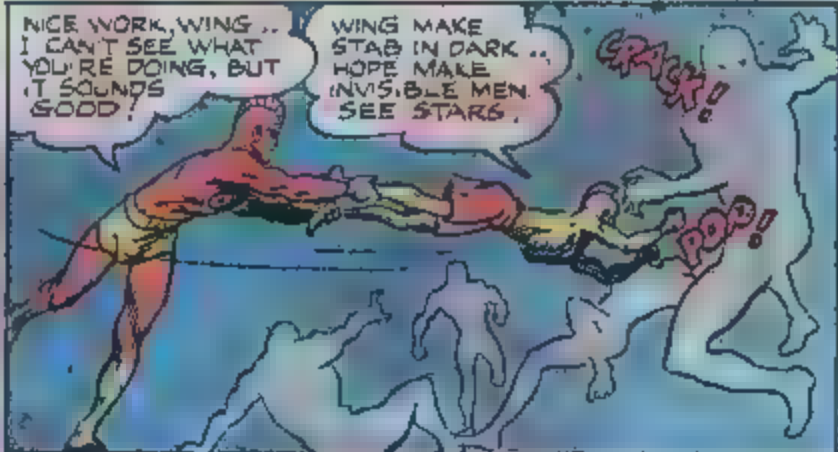
A WERD STRUGGLE ENSUES,
AS THE COURAGEOUS FEAR
BATTLES UNSEEN OPPONENTS!

WING NO CAN SEE,
BUT MAKE CONTACT
FEEL BETTER.



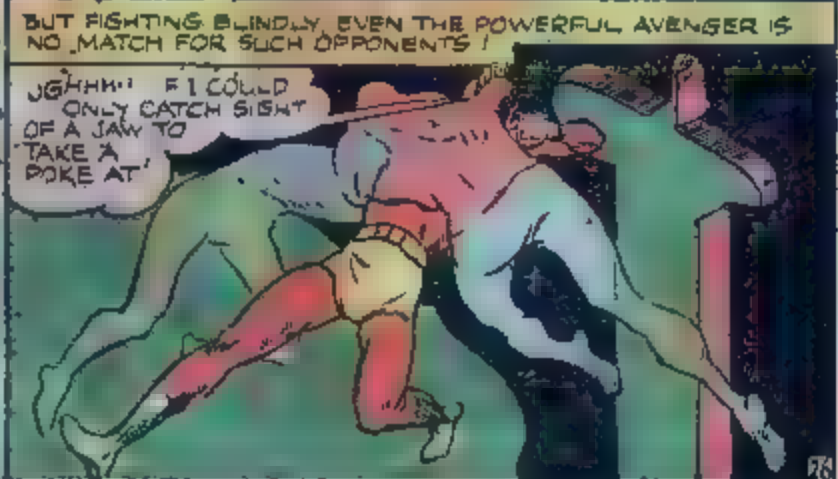
NICE WORK, WING..
I CAN'T SEE WHAT
YOU'RE DOING, BUT
IT SOUNDS
GOOD!

WING MAKE
STAB IN DARK..
HOPE MAKE
INVISIBLE MEN
SEE STARS.



BUT FIGHTING BLINDLY, EVEN THE POWERFUL AVENGER IS
NO MATCH FOR SUCH OPPONENTS!

UGHHH!! I COULD
ONLY CATCH SIGHT
OF A JAW TO
TAKE A
POKE AT!



SECONDS LATER ..

AM WOE NVIS BLE NOW
FIST HIT WNS THEYRE
ON HEAD MAKE OFF TO DO
BIG US BLE WHATEVER
BUMP DRY WORK
THEY CAME HERE
FOR AND THEY
THNK WE CAN T
FND OUT WHAT
IT S

BUT I'LL FOOL THEM
T WONT BE LONG
BEFORE WE'RE IN
THE R TRAIL.

WNS
NO UNDER-
STAND HOW
FOLLOW WHEN
NO CAN SEE

BUT SOON THE AVENGER SUPPLIES AN
ANSWER IN THE FORM OF SOMETHING
HUGE, UNSANLY AND SNIFFLING

THE WIZARD TELLS ME THAT THIS
NATIVE DOG-CAT CAN FOLLOW A TRAIL
LIKE A BLOODHOUND. WE'LL LEARN
WHAT THOSE NVISBLE BOYS CAME
HERE FOR AND PERHAPS
WE'LL HAVE A SURPRISE
FOR THEM

DOG-
CAT
ALSO HAVE
SUPRISE,
WHEN HE
NO SEE
MEN HE
KIND!

DONT WORRY
ABOUT HIM,
WNS MAYBE
HE WILL SEE
THEM!

WHY IS
YOU MAKE
NVISBLE
MEN
VIBBLE?

LATER

THE RED-CLAD ONE AND HIS
COMPANION FOLLOW

THOUGH THEY
SEE US NOT YET
DO THEY FND US
IT S REMARKABLE
BUT STILL HAVE WE
THE ADVANTAGE

YES WNS THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT
THE CRUSON AVENGER HOPES
TO DO. NOW I'LL WAIT AND SEE!

AS THE TRAILERS CLOSE IN ON
THE R UNSEEN PREY THE LATTER
PREPARE TO STRIKE FIRST

MUST BE GETTING
CLOSE BUT STILL
NO CAN SEE
WHEN YOU
PLAY
TICK
YOU
HAVE UP
SLEEVE

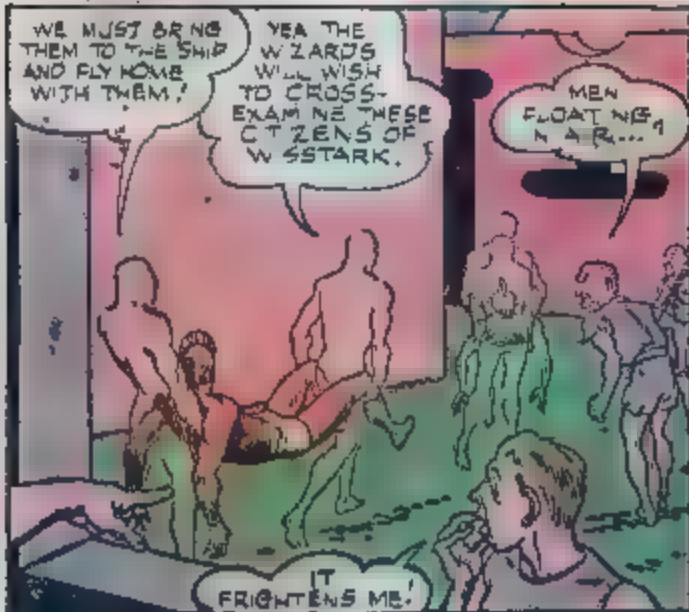
TOO LATE IT S

I KNOW
WHERE THEY ARE
FEEL RIST ON MY
JAW

IF I COULD
ONLY GETTR
MY BELT
AHHH

THIS
TIME WE
MUST NOT
LET THEM
GO FREE

THATS JUST
THE TROUBLE WNS
I'LL HAVE TO KNOW WHERE
THEY ARE BEFORE I CAN
MAKE THEM VIBBLE,
AND THEN
IT MIGHT
BE TOO
LATE!



AS THE GIANT SHIP DE-
VOURS MILE AFTER MILE...

AH! IN THE DISTANCE CAN I
SEE OUR HOMES

A SCANT
FEW MOMENTS
MORE AND WE
SHALL HAVE COM-
PLETED OUR
TASKS.

MEANWHILE THE CRIMSON
AVENGER HAS SOUGHT VAIN-
LY FOR A METHOD OF ESCAPE:

I THOUGHT I'D BE ABLE TO
ELUDE THEM, BUT NOW HERE,
WITH MY HANDS
TIED AND UNDER
CONSTANT WATCH
I HAVEN'T HAD
A CHANCE

HELLO
MIST CRIMSON!
LOOK! AS WE
WALK INTO
TRAP!

WE SURE
DID, WING. THERE'S
NO HOPE OF ESCAPE
EITHER!

I SAID THAT
FOR THEIR BENEFIT, THEY W-
BE LESS WATCHFUL NOW, IF I
CAN GET OVER TO THAT
GLASS PANEL...

FUMBLING RAPIDLY
IN HIS BELT, THE
VALIANT CRIME-
CRUSHER SECURES
A TINY GLASS
CAPSULE.

THERE
ARE MORE
WAYS THAN
ONE OF
MAKING
YOURSELF
INVULNERABLE

AS THE CAPSULE SHATTERS, A
CRIMSON CLOUD BILLOWS OUT-
WARD AND UNDER ITS COVER,
THE RESOURCEFUL SOLDIER OF
VICTORY NICHES RAPIDLY AC-
ROSS THE SHIP...

I WANT
SOME BROKEN
GLASS! I'LL
HAVE TO
TAKE MY
CHANCES OF
BEING CUT!

WHAT HAS
HAPPENED TO
OUR PRISONER?

CRASH!

HERE HE IS!
HE'S RUNNING
AWAY!

I WONDER
WHOM THEY'VE
CAUGHT THERE.
I HOPE IT ISN'T
WING!

IF ONLY THEY GOT ONE
OF THESE OWN MEN
STEADY, WING, YOU'LL
BE FREE IN A SECOND
OR TWO!

CRIMSON CAP-
SULE FOOL-
VULNERABLE
MEN ALL A
SAME WE STILL
NO CAN SEE
THEM

IN THIS CLOUD, THEY CAN'T
SEE US & THERE WE'RE ALL
INVISIBLE NOW.
I'LL JUST BREAK
ANOTHER
CAPSULE TO MAKE
SURE!

AH
SMOKE-SCREEN
GET IN THEIR
EYES!

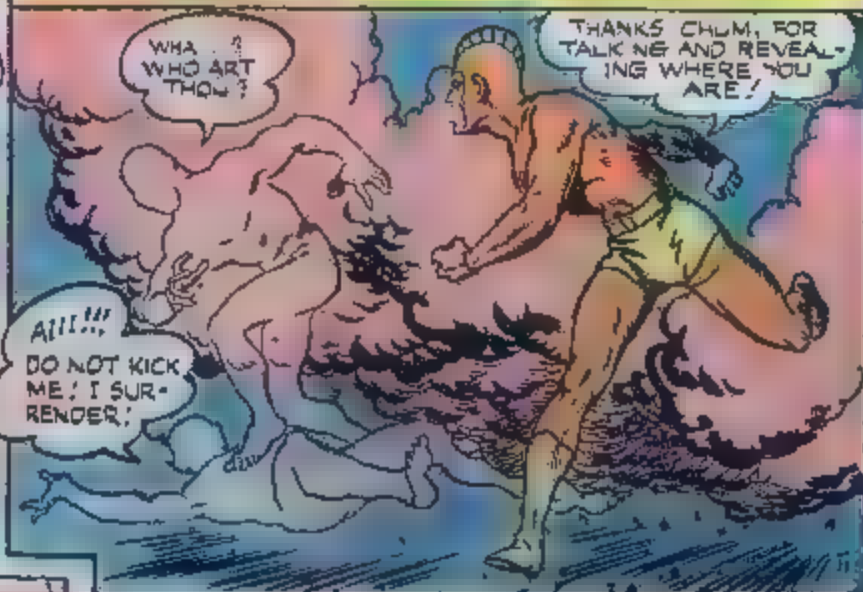


WITH ALL THE ANTAGONISTS UNSEEING AND UNSEEN, A
BITTER COMBAT RAGES IN THE ONRUSHING VESSEL!

WHA...?
WHO ART
THOU?

THANKS CHUM, FOR
TALKING AND REVEAL-
ING WHERE YOU
ARE!

ALL!!!
DO NOT KICK
ME! I SUR-
RENDER!



DON'T
MENTION
IT! IT
WAS A PLEA-
SURE!



AH,
THAT'S
BETTER!

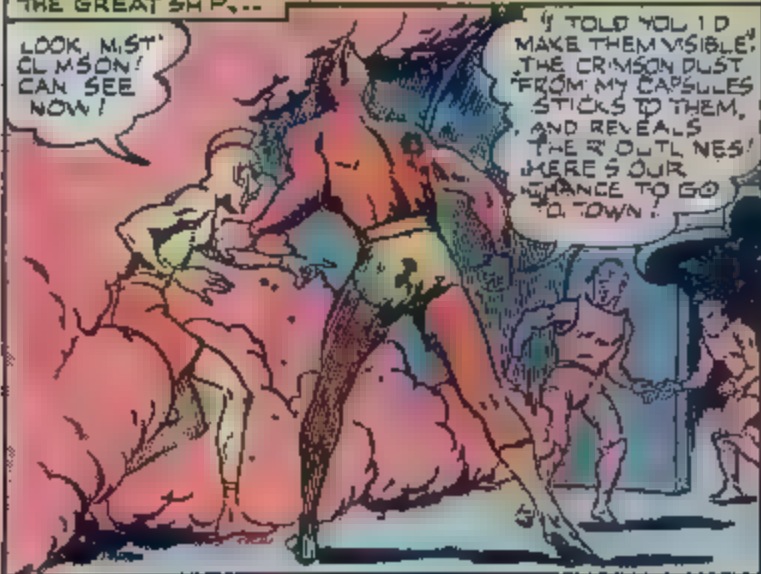
OOPS! I AIM FOR JAW, HIT NECK! EXCUSE,
P-SS, NO
CAN SEE
WHAT I DO!



AS A GUST OF WIND DRIVES THROUGH A VENTILATOR INTO
THE GREAT SHIP...

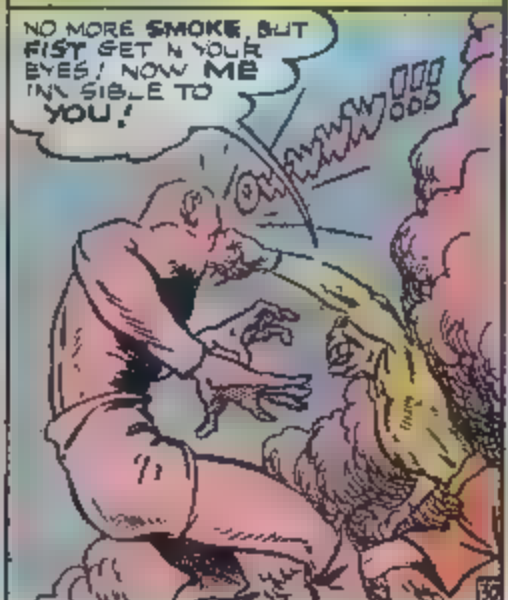
LOOK, MIST'
CLIMSON!
CAN SEE
NOW!

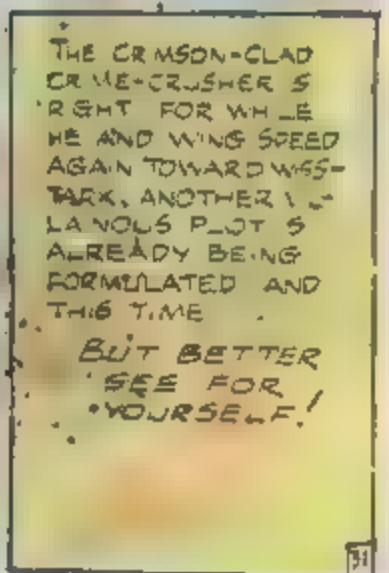
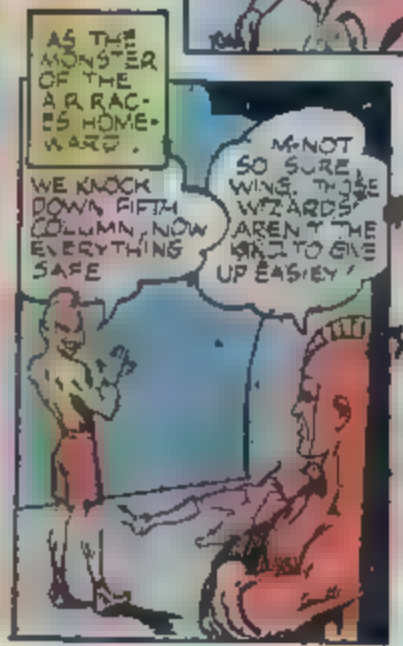
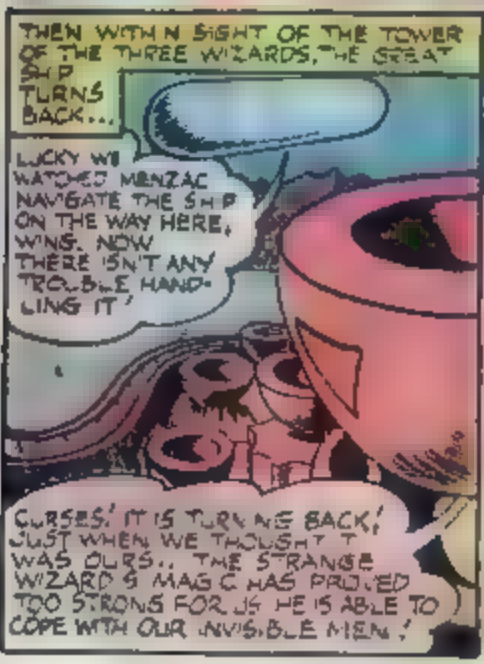
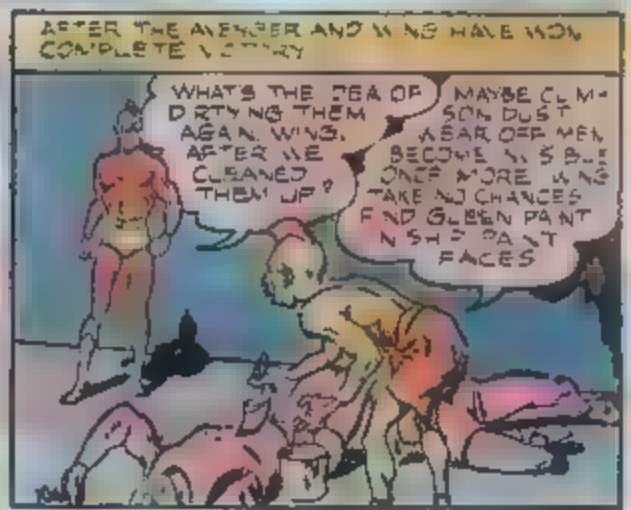
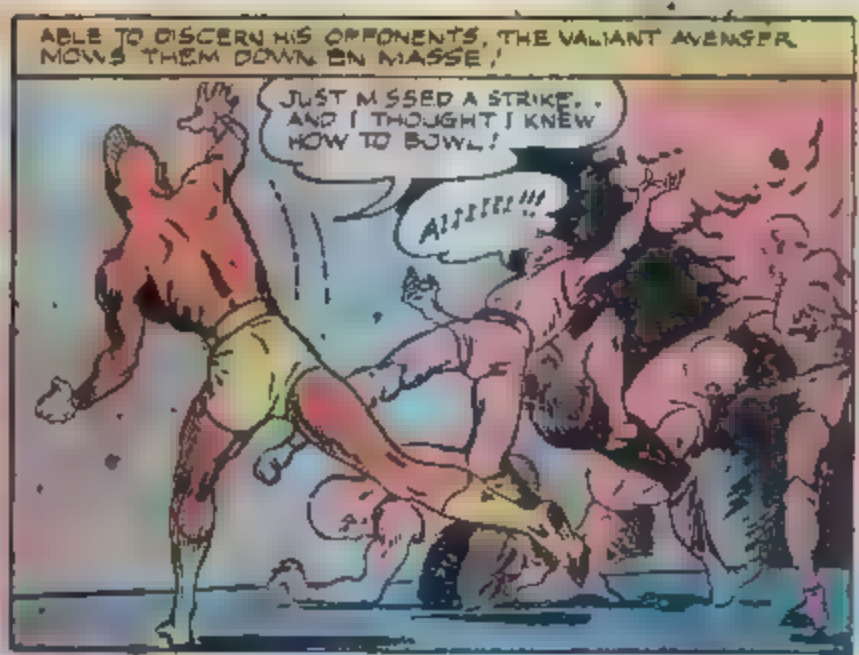
I TOLD YOU I'D
MAKE THEM VISIBLE!
THE CRIMSON DUST
FROM MY CAPSULES
STICKS TO THEM,
AND REVEALS
THEIR OUTLINES!
HERE'S OUR
CHANCE TO GO
TOWN!



AND A NEW PHASE OF THE BATTLE
COMMENCES!

NO MORE SMOKE, BUT
FIST GET IN YOUR
EYES! NOW ME
INVISIBLE TO
YOU!





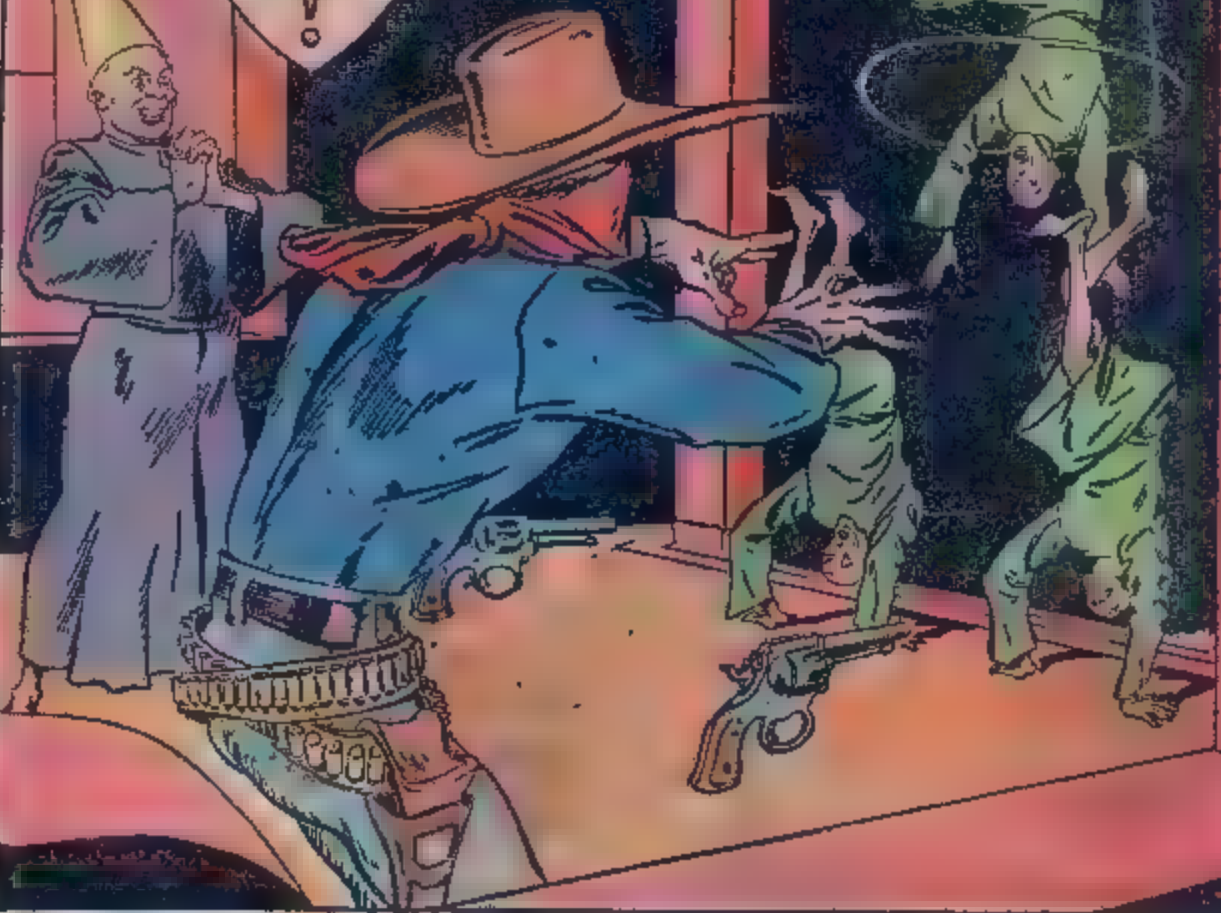
VIGILANTE

CHAPTER 5

IT EN'T EASY TO CATCH THE VIGILANTE OFF-GUARD! IT TAKES A WIZARD TO DO IT...OR AT LEAST A WIZARD'S DOUBLE; AND WHEN THE DUPLICATE SORCERER THREATENS DISASTER, AND THE CLANSMAN OF THE PLAINS RACES TO FORESTALL HIM, IT'S ONLY SOME FIRST-CLASS WIZARDRY ON THE WESTERN WADDY'S OWN PART THAT WARDS OFF...

"DOUBLE TROUBLE"

!



IN THE TOWER OF TREACHERY, NEW EVIL DESIGNS
HAVE BEEN HATCHED...

THOUGH ALL OUR
OTHER PLANS FAIL...
IF THIS SUCCEEDS,
WE HAVE WON!

I UNDERSTAND, O
WIZARDUS. I SHALL
TAKE MY MEN, AND DO
AS I HAVE BEEN
COMMANDED.



THAT NIGHT...

THESE ARE DESERTED
SPOTS. THERE BE
FEW GUARDS
NEARBY!

LET THEM
COME FOR US
IF THEY
WILL. WE
HAVE MEANS
TO DEAL
WITH THEM.

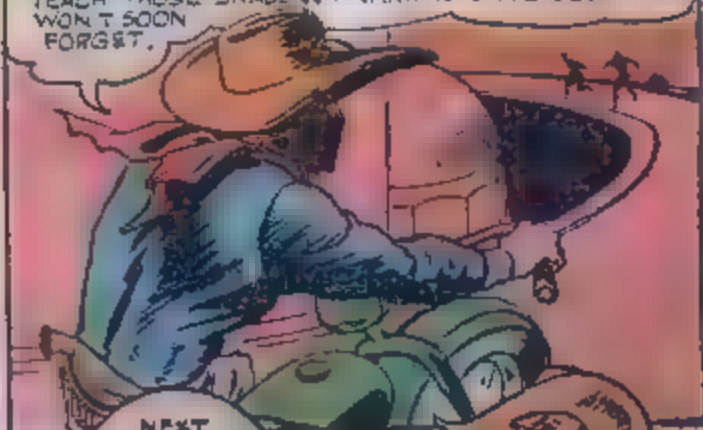


MEANWHILE THE VIGILANTE HAS BEEN
PATROLLING THE WALLS IN HIS OWN
WAY...

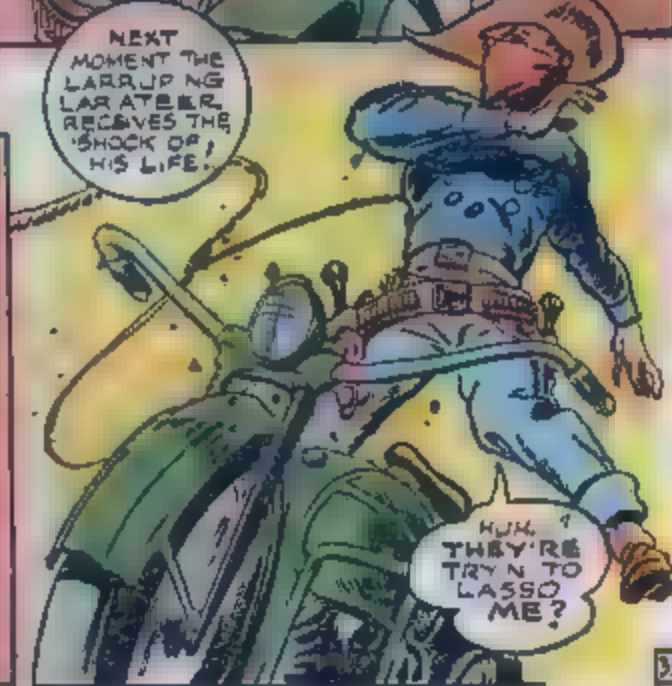
MORE THAN A HUNDRED
GUARDS WATCHING THESE
WALLS... BUT I CAN GO
AROUND THEM MYSELF IN TEN
MINUTES AND FIND ANY SIDE-
WINDER TOWN TO SNEAK IN...



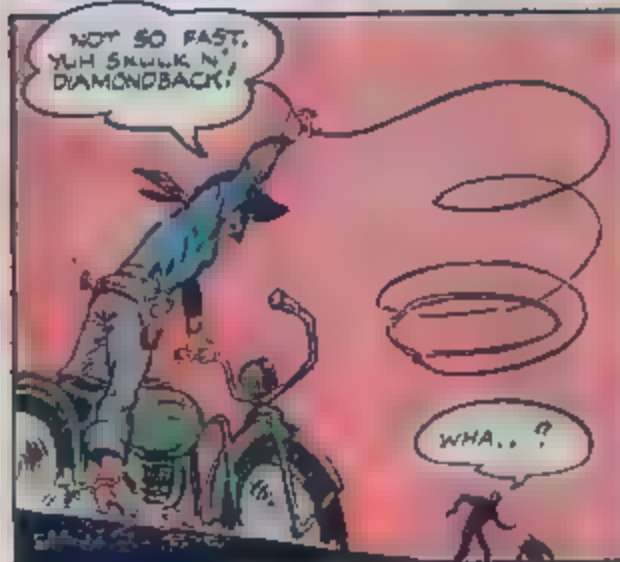
KYOODLIN' COYOTES TALK OF THE DEVIL...
TEACH THOSE SHADDOY VARMINTS A LESSON THEY
WON'T SOON
FORGET.



NEXT
MOMENT THE
LARRUP'NG
LARRATER
RECEIVES THE
'SHOCK OF
HIS LIFE.



NOT SO FAST,
YUH SKULKIN'
DIAMONDBACK!



WHA...?

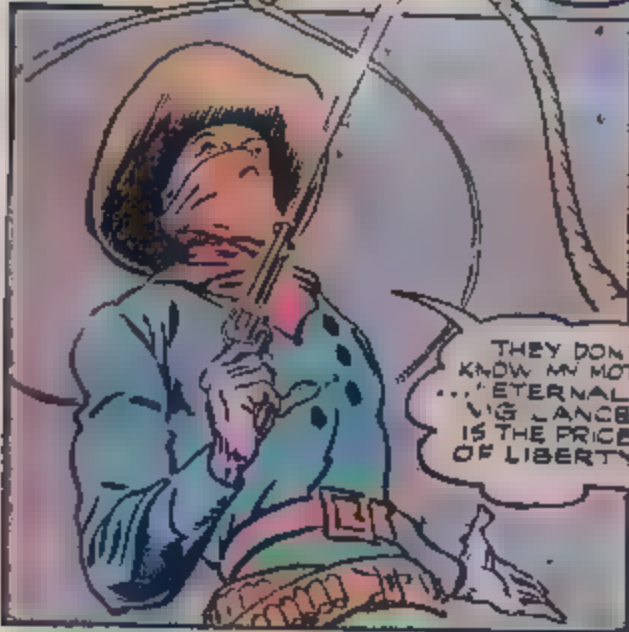
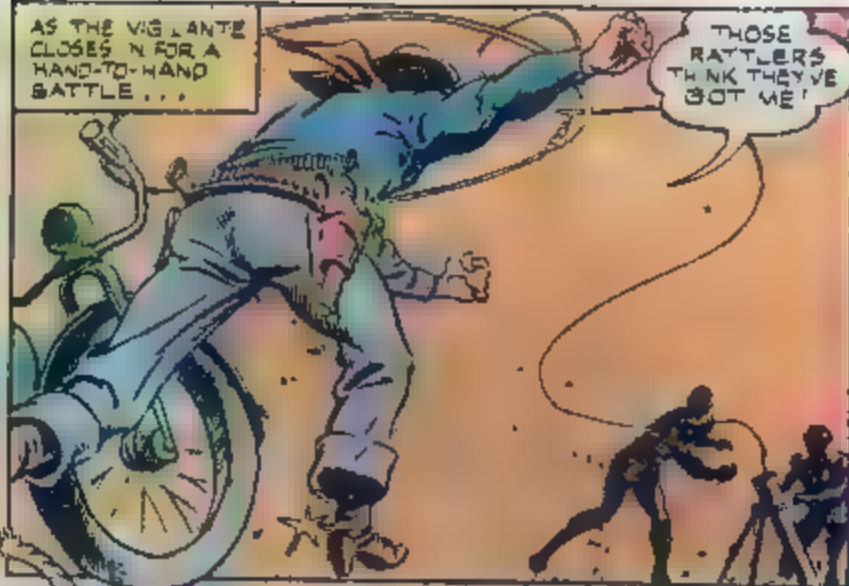
HUH?
THEY'RE
TRYIN'
TO LASSO
ME?

THIS MUST BE
ANOTHER WIZARD.
HE RIDES A
STRANGE STEED
THAT SNORTS
SMOKE.

AND HE
KNOWS OUR
SECRET
WEAPON.
HE TOO WOULD
HURL A ROPE!

AS THE VIGILANTE
CLOSES IN FOR A
HAND-TO-HAND
BATTLE...

THOSE
RATTLERS
THINK THEY'VE
GOT ME!



THEY DON'T
KNOW MY MOTTO
... "ETERNAL
VIGILANCE
IS THE PRICE
OF LIBERTY!"

THIS SHADOW
HAS A SOLID
JAW...

EEEE
HHHHH



THEN, AS A
STRAY BEAM
OF LIGHT...
LUM NATES
THE STRUGGLE
THE VIGILANTE
FOR THE FIRST
TIME GLIMPSES
THE FACE OF
ONE OF HIS
OPPONENTS.

GREAT GUNS
AND LITTLE GOPH-
ERS I'M SEE N'
THINGS IT'S THE
WIZARD OF
WISSTARK !!!

YES
WRETCH -
AND WHAT
DO YOU HERE!

WITH THE SPEED OF A STRIKING PANTHER, THE
WESTERN WADDY'S FISTS LASH
OUT AGAIN AND AGAIN...

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE ABLE
TO MOVE FASTER THAN A
SHADOW... BUT
I'M DOING IT!



AS THE ASTOUNDED WARRIOR HESITATES...

IF HE HAD NOT STOPPED TO STARE, I WOULD HAVE MISSED HIM! NOW HE'S OUT OF OUR WAY!

UGH...

SEE, NOW CLEARLY HE AWAITS MY COMMAND. NOW I TWIST THESE STRANGE REINS...

BUT WITH A FINAL REAR, LIKE AN UNTAMED MUSTANG...

AND... DO NOT PURSUE ME, I MEANT NOT WHAT I THREATENED!

THE VICTORS EXAMINE THEIR SPOILS...

IT'S THE MAGIC STEED BUT WE KNOW NOT HOW TO RIDE HIM!

I CAN DO IT MASTER! I CAN TAME ANY STEED THAT EVER BREATHED!

WITH THE LEAP OF A STARTLED FAWN, THE VIGILANTE'S SNORTING STEED STRIKES TERROR INTO THE TOO-DARING SPES...

STOP, STUBBORN STEED OR I SHALL THRASH THEE TILL THOU GROAN ALOUD!

I HAVE DONE THEE NO HARM! BITE ME, NOT!

CURSES ON THE WRETCHED NAG! FOR THIS DEED, SHALL DEATH BE HIS PORTION!

LATER... NOW HAVE I A MORE IMPORTANT TASK TO PERFORM!

AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE WIZARD'S PALACE.

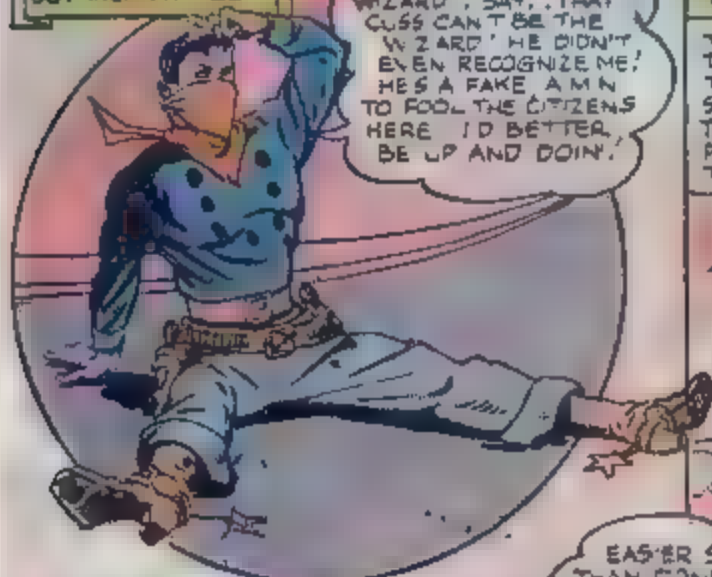
THE WIZARD...
THOUGHT YE
WERE INSIDE!

I HAVE WAYS OF
LEAVING THAT YE WOT
NOT OF. NOW I RE-
TURN TO SEEK MY
REST!



BUT MEANWHILE

WONDER WHY THE
WIZARD, SAY, THAT
CUSS CAN'T BE THE
WIZARD? HE DIDN'T
EVEN RECOGNIZE ME!
HE'S A FAKE, A M N
TO FOOL THE CITIZENS
HERE. I'D BETTER
BE UP AND DOIN'!



THE STEALTHY SPES TRANSFERSE THE PALACE
CORRIDORS UNCHALLENGED...

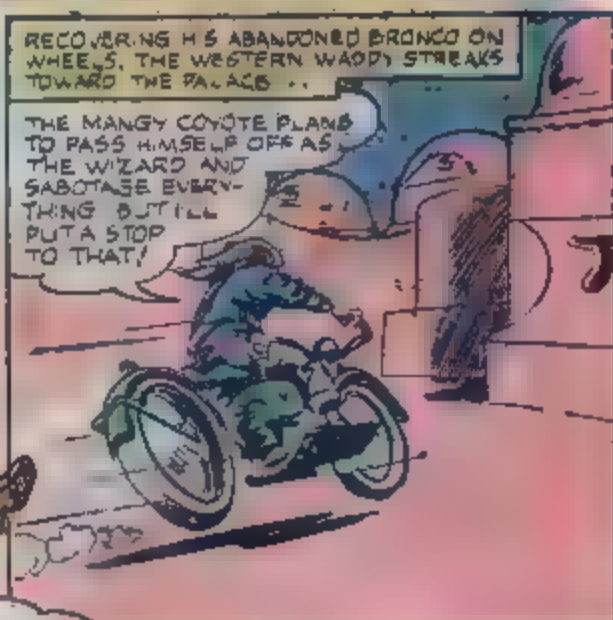
THE WIZARD HAS
STRANGE COMPANIONS!
BUT 'TIS NOT FOR ME
TO CHALLENGE HM!

EVEN
THE
GUARDS
M STAKE
ME! I
CANNOT
FALL!



RECOVERING HIS ABANDONED BRONCO ON
WHEELS, THE WESTERN WADDY STREAKS
TOWARD THE PALACE...

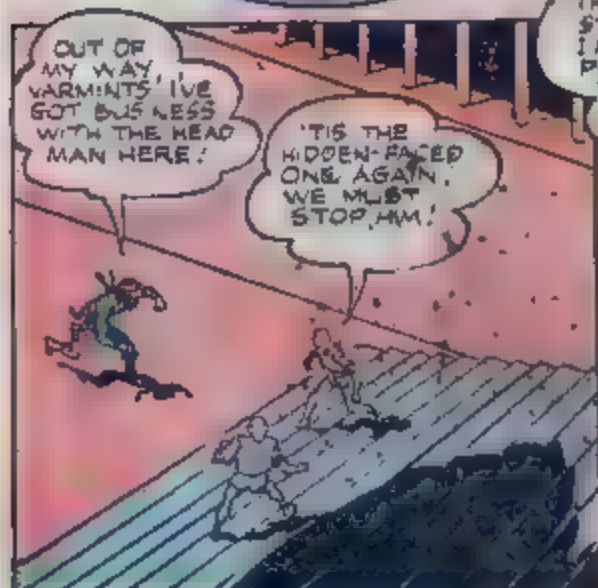
THE MANGY COYOTE PLANS
TO PASS HIMSELF OFF AS
THE WIZARD AND
SABOTAGE EVERY-
THING BUT ILL
PUT A STOP
TO THAT!



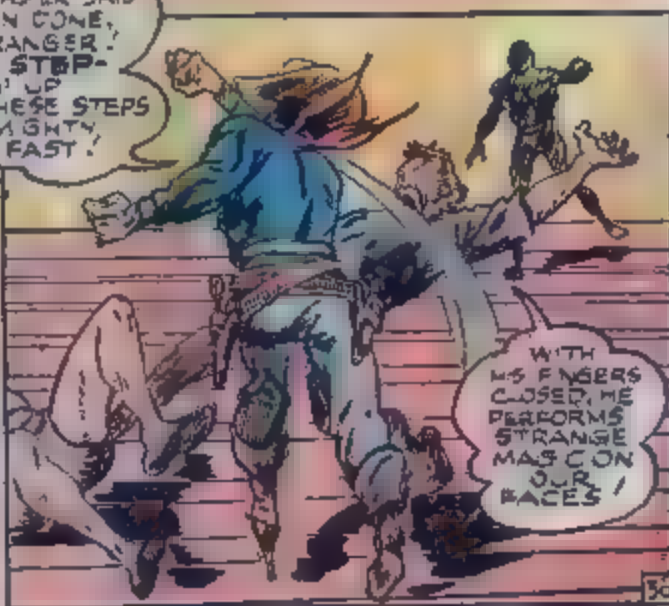
EASER SAID
THAN GONE,
STRANGER!
I'M STEP-
PIN' UP
THESE STEPS
MIGHTY
FAST!

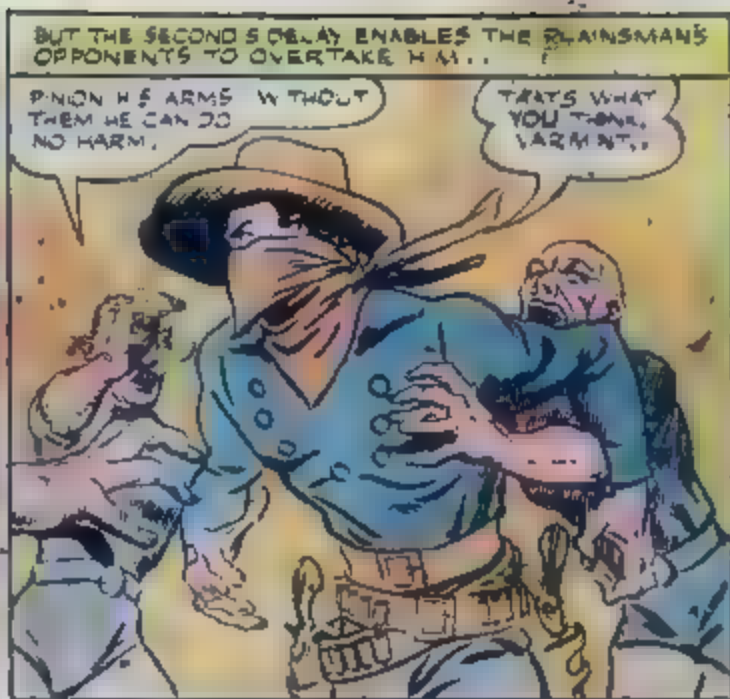
OUT OF
MY WAY,
VARMINTS! I'VE
GOT BUSINESS
WITH THE HEAD
MAN HERE!

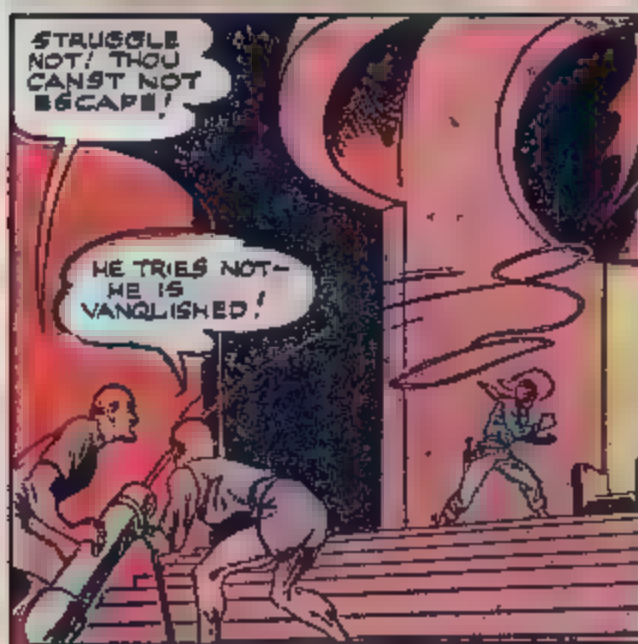
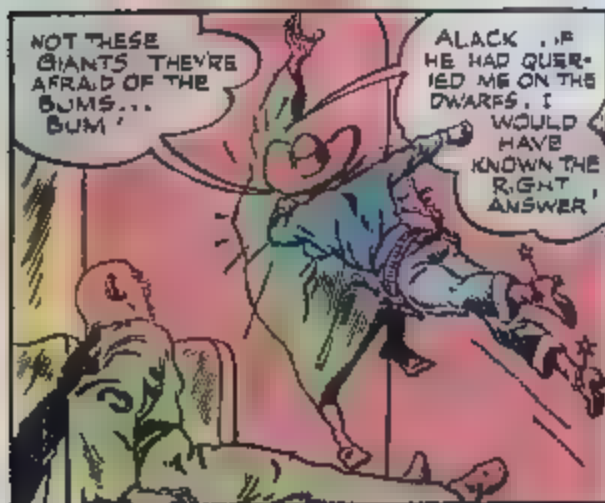
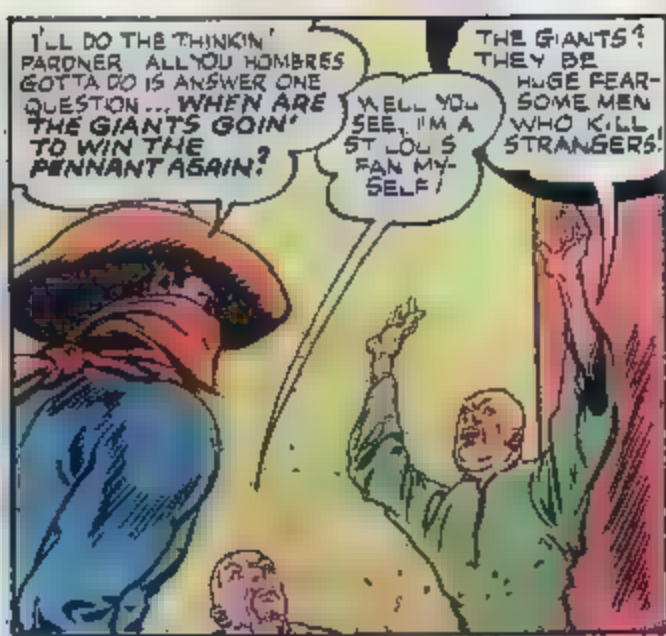
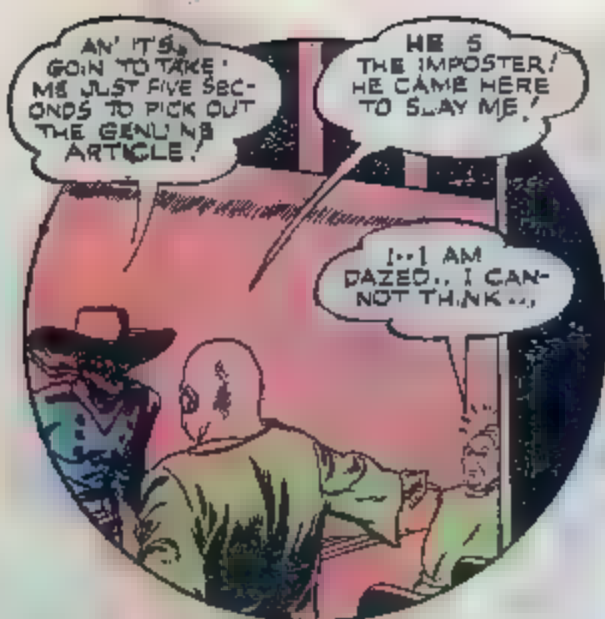
'TIS THE
HIDDEN-FACED
ONE, AGAIN.
WE MUST
STOP HM!



WITH
HIS FINGERS
CLOSED, HE
PERFORMS
STRANGE
MAGIC ON
OUR
FACES!







NEXT SECOND ANOTHER ILLUSION
STRIKES TERROR INTO THE PLANS-
MAN'S OPPONENTS.

THIS IS
ANOTHER
ONE

NOW WE MUST
FIGHT AGAINST
FOUR. LET US
RUN BEFORE WE
INCREASE TO A
THOUSAND!

YOU'RE GOIN'
IN THE WRONG
DIRECTION, RATTLES

YUM MUST HAVE GOT
TWISTED AROUND.
ALLOW ME TO STRAIGHTEN
YUH OUT.

THIS FINISHES YOU,
VARMINTS!

THOSE TRICK DOORS
IN THE WALLS AND
THOSE MIRRORS CAME
IN HANDY PARTNER!
THEY FOOLED THIS
BUNCH OF SPIES
MIGHTY NEAT.


THE REAL
MIRACLE, VIGILANTE,
IS WHAT YOU DID
WITH YOUR
FISTS!

IT WAS A
PLEASURE! NOW IF
YOU'LL JUST HOGTIE
THESE COYOTES AND
HIDE 'EM AWAY THOSE
WIZARDS'LL THINK
THEIR PLAN HAS
SUCCEEDED!

THAT'LL PUT US A
STEP AHEAD OF THEM!
AND IF THE SHINING
KNIGHT DOES A GOOD
JOB WITH THAT ARMY...
WE'LL BE ALL SET.

THE SHINING KNIGHT

CHAPTER 6



REMEMBER THE SHINING KNIGHT'S ASSIGNMENT? IT'LL BE HIS TASK TO COMBAT THE THREE WAZARDS, ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE! BUT NOT SO FAST, SIR! JUST THIS A GENERAL, ALL RIGHT, BUT A GENERAL WITHOUT SOLDIERS CAN'T HE CAN MARCH HIS WAY THROUGH PERIL AND CONQUER HIS OWN MEN AND EVEN A SUCCESSOR HIS WILL COMMAND ONLY THE RAW MATERIAL FOR VICTORY AS HIS FEAREDLED FIGHTING FORCES SET OUT ON...

**"THE MARCH
OF THE
WOODEN-ARMORED
SOLDIERS!"**

ASTRIDE HIS WINGED STEED,
THE SHINING KNIGHT HEADS
FOR A RENDEZVOUS WITH
THE ARMY HE MUST LEAD.

BY MY SWORD, I SHALL TEACH
THESE FLEDGLING SOLDIERS
THE ART OF
WAR RIGHT MERRILY.
WILL WE
BASTE OUR
FOEMEN!

NOT SO FAST,
SIR KNIGHT. BE-
FORE THOU CANST
TEACH, THOU
MUST THYSELF
ENGAGE THE
PRESENT
GENERAL
IN COMBAT.

THOU MUST SUBDUCE HIM,
OR BRAVE SOLDIERS
WILL NOT FOLLOW
THEE!

I WAS
NEVER ONE
TO SHUN A
FIGHT! BRING
ME TO HIM, AND
I WILL CONQUER
HIM!

MANY MILES LATER, AS THE TRAIL LEADS
THROUGH A DENSE FOREST...

I HEAR THE BEATING
OF GREAT WINGS AS
THOUGH OF MONSTROUS
BIRDS...

WE MUST
BE CAREFUL,
KNIGHT. DRAW
THY SWORD, AND...

BUT BEFORE
THE KNIGHT
CAN COMPLY,
A WINGED
HORDE
SWOOPS
SUDDENLY
DOWN...

FLYING APES!
BY MY HELMET,
THIS MUST BE
A DREAM

HAH,
KNIGHT!
IT IS REAL.
BEWARE
THEIR
TEETH!

SIR JUSTIN'S GLEAMING SWORD
FLASHES AGAIN AND AGAIN...

THE FLAT OF MY SWORD WILL
TEACH THEE AS SHARP A LES-
SON AS THE EDGE, THOU FLYING
ROGUE!

MY LANCE
WILL DANCE ON
THY NAPE, APE.

THEN THE SUDDEN BEATING OF
HEAVILY BURDENED PINIONS
DRAWS THE SHINING KNIGHT'S
GLANCE ALOFT.

SAVE
ME,
KNIGHT!

ODDSBOOKS!
I LIKE NOT THE
TRICKS OF
THESE
BEASTS.

THEIR UGLY FACES MIND ME TOO GREATLY
OF THE PICTURES I HAVE SEEN OF
THE THREE EVIL WIZARDS!

BUT MERLIN'S ENCHANTED BLADE
CAN SHEAR THROUGH ALL
OBSTACLES!

AS SIR
JUSTIN
SPEEDS
UPWARD,
THRUSTING
BRANCHES
BAR HIS
WAY.

VICTORY IS TOO
LARGE TO SLIP
THROUGH AS
THESE APES
HAVE DONE.

MOMENTS LATER, AS THE KNIGHT NEARS THE
FLEEING CREATURES...

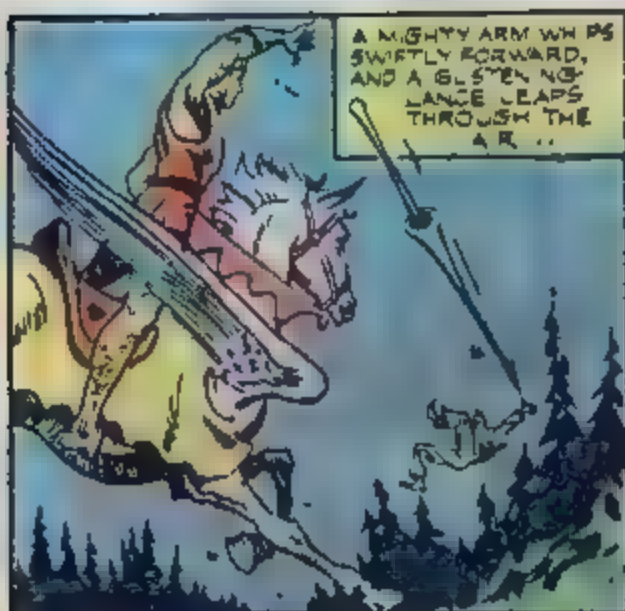
HELP!
KNIGHT!

AFTER HIM, VICTORY
HERE HE CRASH TO
EARTH.

THE BRANCHES CUT OFF
PURSUIT! I MUST ACT
QUICKLY...

WHOOO...

WHOOO...



A MIGHTY ARM WHIPS
SWIFTLY FORWARD,
AND A GLISTENING
LANCE LEAPS
THROUGH THE
AIR...



OOOOOOO...
THE KNIGHT HAS
SAVED ME!

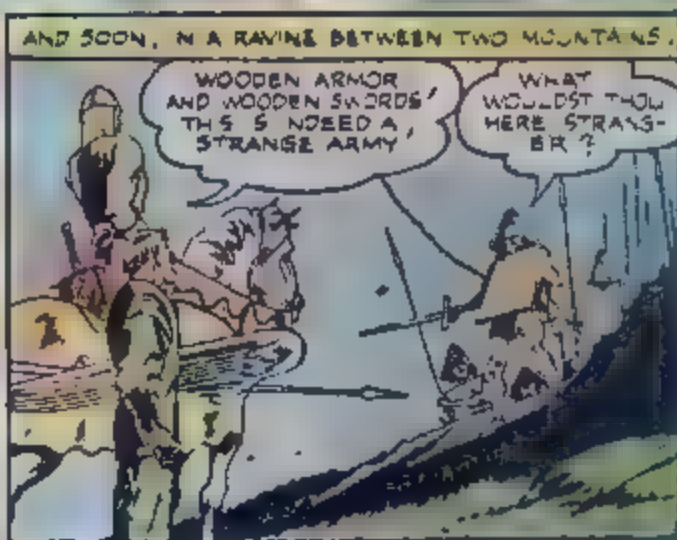
AH... MY HAND
HAS NOT LOST
ITS CUNNING!



PRESENTLY...

I OWE THEE MY
LIFE, KNIGHT

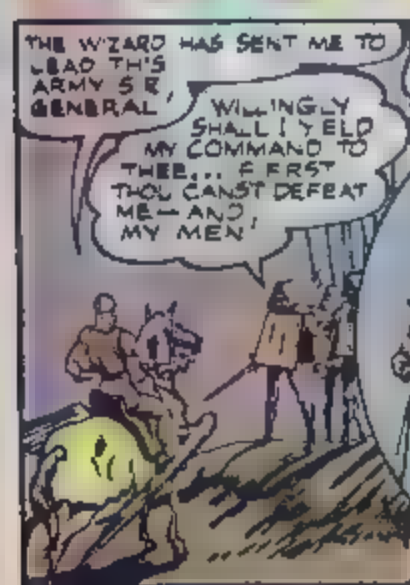
I AM
VOWED TO
RENDER AID TO
THOSE WHO NEED IT.
WE HAVE LOST TIME. LET
US PRESS ONWARD TO
FIND THIS GENERAL. I
MUST SUBDUCE



AND SOON, IN A RAVINE BETWEEN TWO MOUNTAINS.

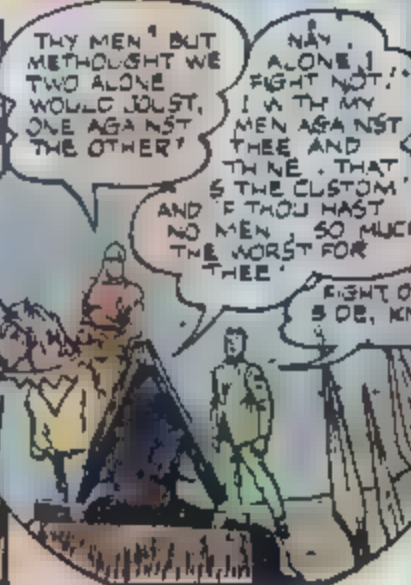
WOODEN ARMOR
AND WOODEN SWORDS.
THIS SMOOSED A
STRANGE ARMY

WHAT
WOULDEST THOU
HERE STRANG-
ER?



THE WIZARD HAS SENT ME TO
LEAD THIS
ARMY, S.R.
GENERAL

WILLINGLY
SHALL I YIELD
MY COMMAND TO
THEE... FIRST
THOU CANST DEFEAT
ME—AND
MY MEN!



THY MEN? BUT
METHOUGHT WE
TWO ALONE
WOULD JOUST,
ONE AGAINST
THE OTHER!

NAY,
ALONE I
FIGHT NOT!
I WITH MY
MEN AGAINST
THEE AND
THINE. THAT
IS THE CUSTOM,
AND IF THOU HAST
NO MEN, SO MUCH
THE WORST FOR
THEE.

I WILL
FIGHT ON—THY
S.O.B., KNIGHT!



MANY THANKS. BUT I
NEED NO AID. PREPARE
THYSELF, S.R. GENERAL!

CAN ONE
MAN
DEFEAT
HUN-
DREDS?
AS THE
BATTLE
BEGINNS..

AT THEM
VICTORY BEFORE
THEY CAN GATHER
THEIR WITS

NOW ARE THEY UNARMED
TURN QUICKLY,
VICTORY..

WHA...?

AS THE WOODEN-ARMORED ARMY
WATCHES IN BEMUDERMENT..

YIELD THEE,
SR GENERAL,
OR ELSE I
LET THEE
DROP
HE KNOWS
NOT I
WOULD NOT
HARM HIM!

THE FIGHT WAS
NOT FAR, THE ODDS
WERE ON THY SIDE,
THOU HAST A
WINGED HORSE!

SR JUST LET HIS CATTLE FALL
GENTLY TO EARTH, AND THEN

NOW I HAVE
NEITHER HORSE
NOR WEAPON
TO FIGHT THOU
THAT'S
FAIR!

AHE
AND NOW
ART THOU
LOST
HO, HO!

IT'S A PLEASANT JEST THOU
LAUGHEST TILL
THY HELMET
SPLITS.

OWWWW...
THIS
JOLTS NO
JESTING,
MATTER

UGH.
I CANNOT
RISE.

THEN LIE
THERE ON
THE GROUND.
THEN SHALL
WE TAKE NO
GROUND
FOR GLAR-
RELING!

NOW DO YE ACKNOWLEDGE
ME YOUR COMMANDER?

AYE, WE DO,
KNIGHT. WE
SHALL BE PROUD
TO FOLLOW
SUCH A
GENERAL!

AND SO ENTER YE UPON
MIS NEW DUTIES, SIR JUST-
TIS HIS FIRST TASK & TO IN-
SPECT HIS NEWLY ACQUIRED
ARMY...

ALACK! NEVER HAVE I
SEEN SUCH UNSOLDIERLY
SOLDIERS! THEY
WOULD NOT
STRIKE FEAR
INTO A MOUSE

IF WE HAD
THE SWORDS
THOU DIDST
DESTROY, KNIGHT,
WE SHOULD BE BRAVE
AS ANY IN THE WORLD!

'TIS TRUE THEY
LACK SWORDS. BUT
SUCH WOODEN WEAPONS
WERE OF LITTLE AVAIL...
HMM, MAYHAP I CAN
PLT THEM TO SOME
USE. THEN MUST I
FIRST RE-ARM
THE MEN!



WITH POWERFUL SWEEPING STROKES THE
KNIGHT SHEARS THROUGH A THICK TREE
TRUNK...

THIS TREE
WILL BURN IN
MANY SWORDS.



PRESENTLY WILL I HAVE ENOUGH...
THEN TO TRIM ALL TO THE
PROPER SHAPE...



SOON...

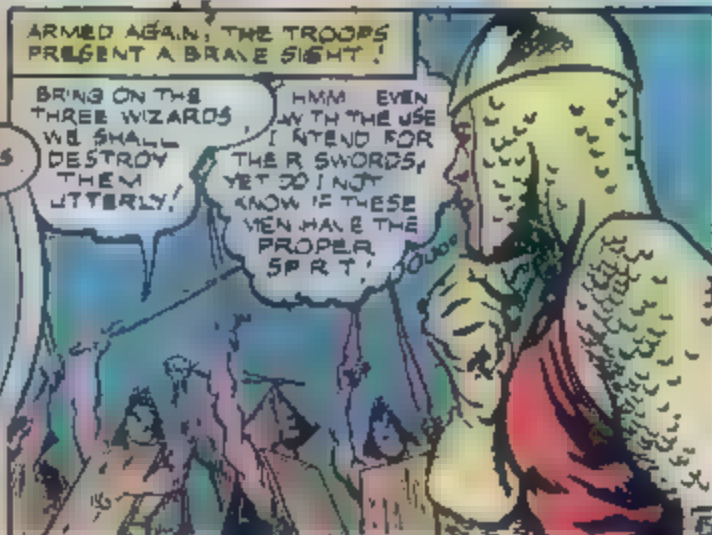
DUNY
WEAPONS
YES-BUT
SHALL MAKE
THEM STRIKE
TERROR INTO
THE EVIL WIZARDS
HEARTS



ARMED AGAIN, THE TROOPS
PRESENT A BRAVE SIGHT!

BRING ON THE
THREE WIZARDS
WE SHALL
DESTROY
THEM
UTTERLY!

HMM. EVEN
WITH THE USE
I INTEND FOR
THEIR SWORDS,
YET DO I NOT
KNOW IF THESE
MEN HAVE THE
PROPER
SPIRIT!



AND SUDDENLY, AS F A ANSWER
TO THE KNIGHT'S THOUGHT...

THE
WIZARDS.

THEY
CAME TO DESTROY
US!

WE
MUST
SAVE
OUR
LIVES!
RUN!



SIR JUSTIN ATTEMPTS VAINLY
TO HALT THE MAD FLIGHT...

HALT BASE CATTIFF!
BETTER TO DIE THAN
TO LIVE A COWARD!

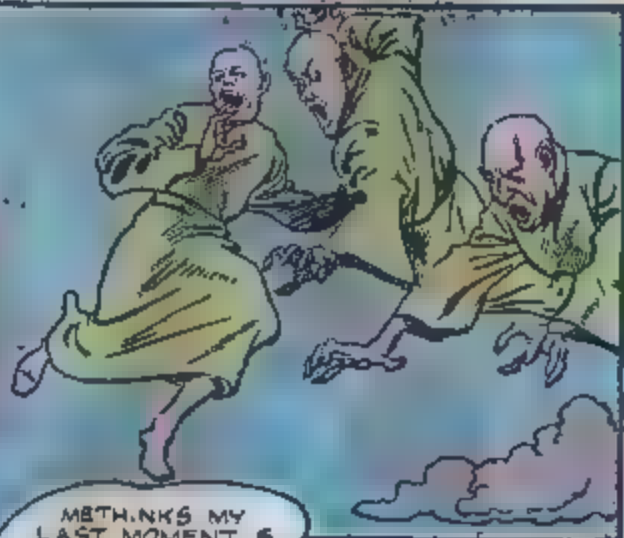
NAY, I STAY
NOT! NONE CAN
WITHSTAND THE
WIZARDS!



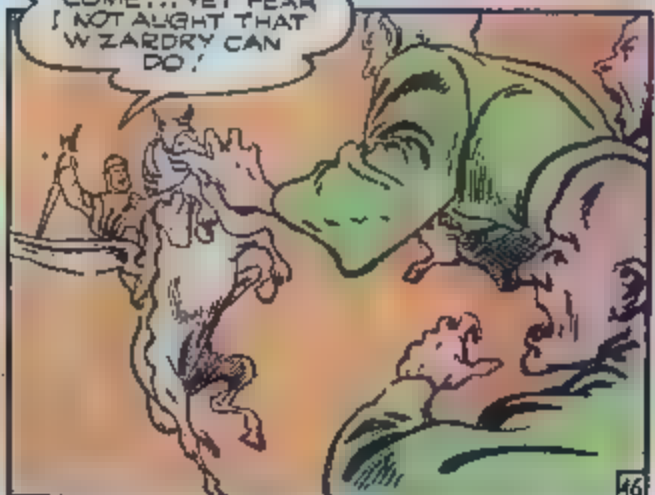
THAT SHALL WE SEE!
WITH AN ARMY OR
WITHOUT... I FLEE
NOT! FORWARD,
VICTORY, TO
BATTLE!



BY MY TROTH, NONE TOLD ME THAT
THE WIZARDS WERE GIANTS!
BUT I HAVE OVERTHROWN
GIANTS BEFORE... FASTER,
VICTORY!



METHINKS MY
LAST MOMENT'S
COME... YET FEAR
NOT! AUGHT THAT
WIZARDRY CAN
DO!



BUT SIR JUSTIN'S
SWORD CUTS
THROUGH
NOTHINGNESS!

WHA?
T-H-S S NO
W-IZ-A-R-D
'T-S BUT A
P-H-A-N-T-O-M!

SECONDS LATER, HARRY PALED
TO TERRIFY THE BRAVE KNIGHT

THEY FADE AWAY, THEY WERE
FEARFUL OF ASPECT, BUT THERE WAS NO HARM
IN THEM. MAYHAP W-L-T-H-S TEACH MY ARMY
W-H-A-T COURAGE CAN DO

I AM
ASHAMED TO
LEAD SUCH
SOLDIERS
Y-E RAN FROM
N-A-U-G-H-T!

NEXT TIME
WILL WE TAKE
EXAMPLE FROM
THY VALOR,
KNIGHT. THE
WIZARDS WILL
NOT MAKE US
RUN AGAIN!

AND SO THE LESSON LEARNED, THE WOODEN-
ARMORED SOLDIERS MARCH FORWARD TO ENGAGE
THE ENEMY.

WOULD THAT KING
ARTHUR COULD
SEE ME NOW,
WE HAD NOT SO
MANY SOLDIERS
TO FOLLOW
MAYHAP I!

AND AS DUSK FALLS...

MY ARMY
S READY,
WOODEN SWORDS
AND ALL!

THE SHINING
KNIGHT!

WE
MEET
JUST N TIME,
PARTNER WE'RE
HEADIN' FOR A
SHOWDOWN WITH
THEM ORNERY
W-IZ-A-R-D
CRITTERS!

YOU'VE ALL DONE A
NICE JOB. NOW WE'LL HAVE
TO GET TOGETHER AND FIGURE
HOW WE'RE GOING TO FIGHT
THIS BATTLE. THE FLOORS
OPEN FOR DISCUSSION,
GENTS

"BATTLE of the WIZARDS!"

PARDONERS, THEN DIAMOND-BACKS AIN'T GOT NO FANGS THEY CAN THROW AN AWFUL SCARE INTO YUH F'YUH GOT WEAK KNEES, BUT THEY DONT DO MUCH DAMAGE

RIGHT, VIG LANTE SPEEDY AND I LEARNED THAT MOST OF THEIR MAGIC CONSISTS IN CREATING ILLUSIONS BY SCIENTIFIC METHODS

AT THE SAME TIME, THEY'RE AFRAID OF OUR MAGIC

AND THEY DONT KNOW WHAT IT IS BECAUSE THEIR FIFTH COLUMN ATTEMPTS FAILED!

THEY NO GOT SHIP, SO NO CAN USE PALACHUTE TROOPS!

AND THEY WONT BE READY FOR THE SURPRISE WE GOT FOR THEM

NOR WILL THEY EXPECT TO MEET SUCH VALANT FIGHTERS AS MY BRAVE MEN.



WELL, IT SURE SEEMS TO STACK UP BAD FOR THE OTHER SIDE, DOESN'T IT? BUT BOYS, I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER... THOSE WIZARDS HAVE PLENTY OF TRICKS UP THEIR SLEEVES! KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN!

THEY AIN'T SCARIN' ME, WIZARD! AFTER WHAT THE KID AND ME WENT THROUGH WITH THEM GIANTS WE AIN'T WORRYIN' ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE THAT MIGHT HAPPEN



IS HUGE MUSCLED STRIPES'S CONFIDENCE JUSTIFIED? ARE THE THREE WILY WIZARDS AT LAST FACING A DISASTER WHICH ALL THEIR POWERS CANNOT AVOID? LET US TAKE ONE LAST GLANCE INTO THEIR TOWER OF TREACHERY...

SO FAR HAVE THEY
ENCOUNTERED FROM US
LITTLE BUT ILLUSIONS!
THEY FEAR US NOT

THEIR FEAR-
LESSNESS WILL
LEAD THEM INTO
A TRAP! THEY WILL
LEARN THAT OUR
ILLUSIONS ARE NOT
SO HARMLESS AS
THEY DEEM
THEM!



IN THE DEAD OF
NIGHT...

THIS RIVER
IS SO SWIFT
THAT NO MAN
CAN SWIM IT.

IF OUR
ENEMIES
FELL INTO
IT THEY
WOULD
BE A
CLICK
DEATH!

THEY SHALL
FALL INTO IT!
NEVER FEAR!



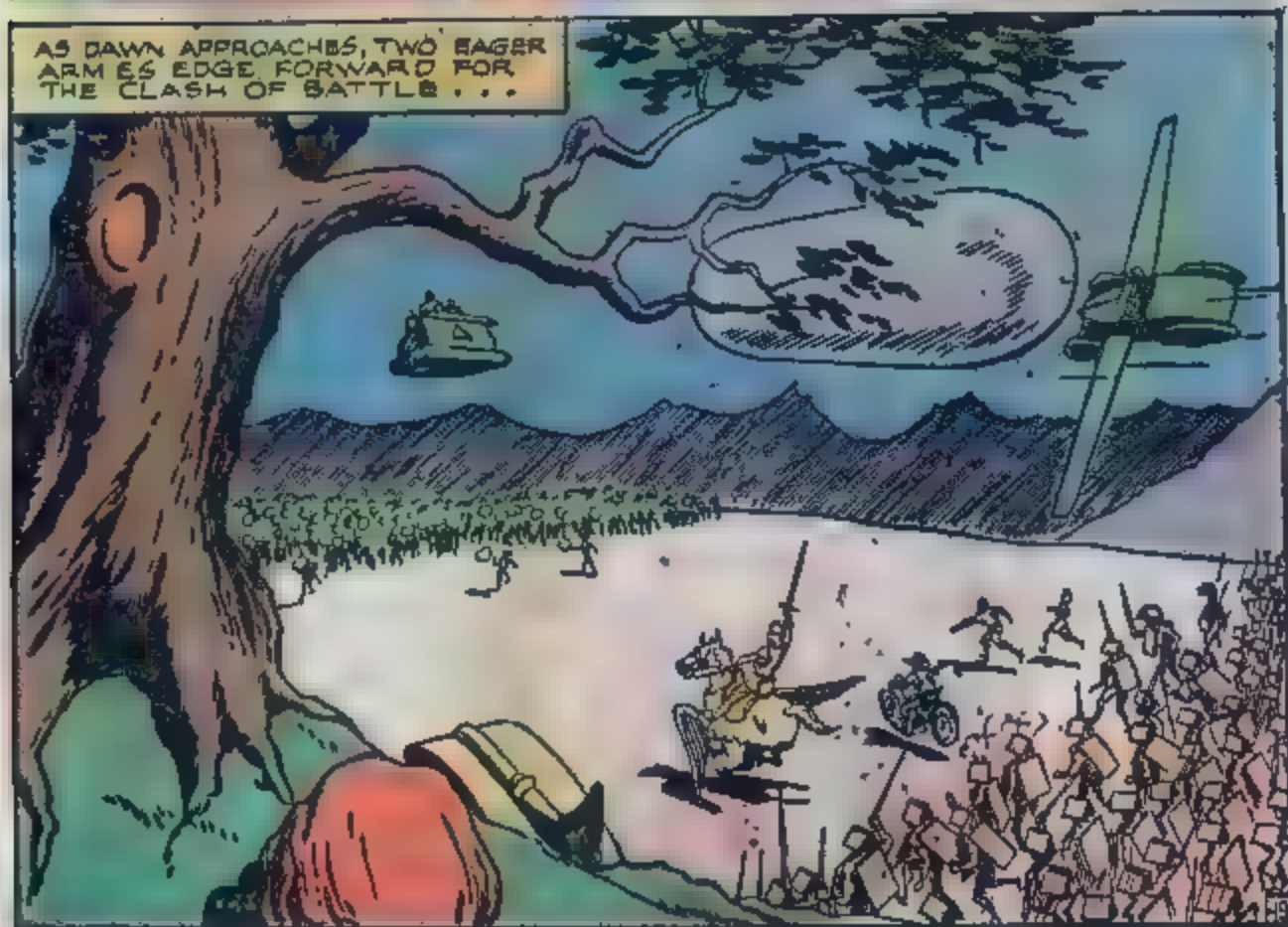
ONCE MORE A DAZZLING CRY-
STAL WORKS ITS MAGIC... AND
AS THE WIZARD TRIO WATCHES,
AN AMAZING TRANSFORMATION
TAKES
PLACE...



TOMORROW
OUR ENEMIES
MEET THEIR
DOOM!



AS DAWN APPROACHES, TWO EAGER
ARMIES EDGE FORWARD FOR
THE CLASH OF BATTLE...



SUDDENLY, AS THE KNIGHT GLANCES BACK AT HIS ARMY...

WHA?
WHERE ARE
THE LAG-
GARDS?

OUR COM-
RADES HAVE VAN-
ISHED! THE WIZARDS
HAVE CONJURED THEM
AWAY!

NOW THE WIZARDS
ARE MAKING THE
KNIGHT TO SHRINK.

WHA? FEAR
NOT! THESE
BE BUT
HARMLESS
TRICKS. I ASSURE
THEE, ONWARD
BRAVE
MEN!

THE MEN HAVE STOOD
BRAVELY TILL
NOW, BUT I
KNOW NOT
HOW MUCH
LONGER THEY CAN
HOLD OUT AGAINST
SUCH TRICKERY.

THEY'LL BE COM-
PLETELY CONFUSED.
UNLESS WE
TAKE THE
INITIATIVE.

RIGHT,
PARDNER,
WE'VE GOTTA
ATTACK!

WING AND
WILL START
OFF BY PAY-
ING THOSE
WIZARDS
BACK WITH
ONE OF
THEIR OWN
TRICKS.
COME ON,
WING!

THEN AN EVEN MORE STARTLING FIGHT GREET'S HIM, AS HE VIEWS THE FORCES OPPOSING HIM...

AND THE ENEMY HAVE
INCREASED MANYFOLD
IN NUMBER.

NEXT MOMENT, A
TREACHEROUS
ASSAILANT APPAR-
ENTLY IN THE R
OWN RANKS
SPREADS
DISMAY.

OUR OWN WIZARD
IS DOUBLE-CROSSING
US!

DON'T
LET THEM KID YOU,
STRONG! THOSE
ROCKS AREN'T REAL.
OUR ENEMIES ARE
JUST TRYING TO
CONFUSE US!

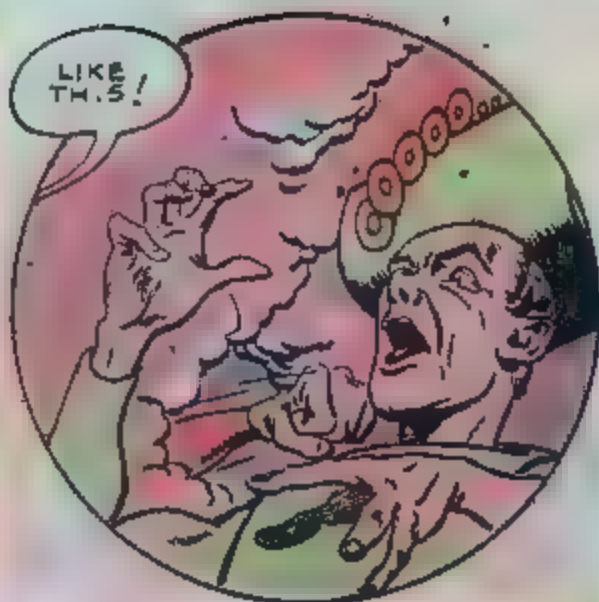
A GLASS CAPSULE SPEEDS THROUGH THE AIR,
AND CRASHES TO EJECT A CRIMSON CLOUD...

REMEMBER, WING,
WE'RE INVISIBLE
ONLY AS LONG AS
WE'RE INSIDE
THIS CLOUD!

WING, REMEMBER, BUT
MAYBE WING'S FIST
FORGET!

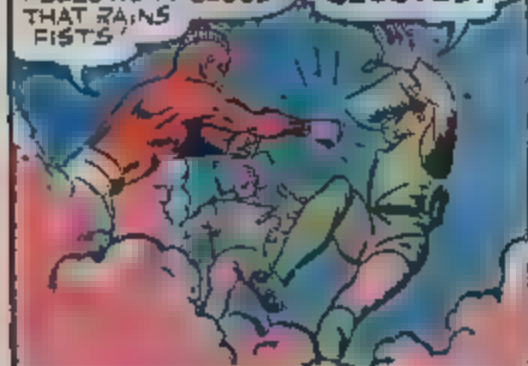


LIKE
THIS!



NICE WORK, WING!
WE'LL SHOW THESE
FELLOWS A CLOUD
THAT RAINS
FISTS!

ALAS, NEVER
HAVE I BEEN SO
CLOUTED!



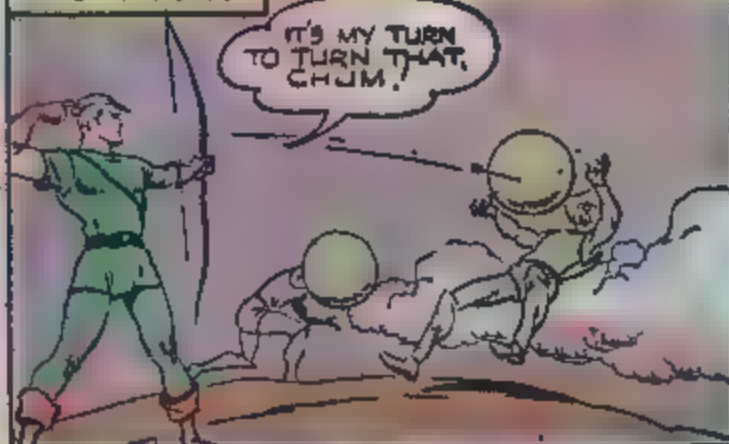
QUITE A
FEATHER IN
YOUR CAP!

EEHHH...
HE
ALMOST
KILLED
ME!



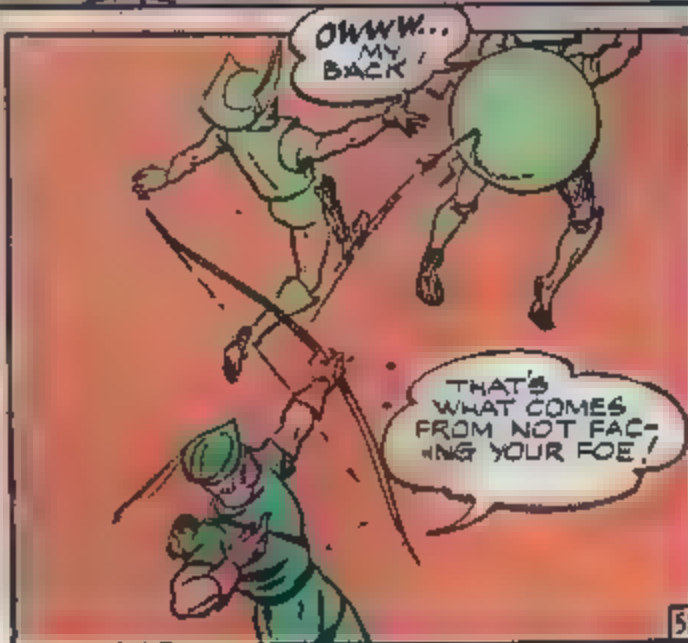
MEANWHILE, THE SKILLED SHAPESMEN ARROW
INTO ACTION!

IT'S MY TURN
TO TURN THAT,
CHUM!



OWWW...
MY
BACK!

THAT'S
WHAT COMES
FROM NOT FAC-
ING YOUR FOE!



AND NOW THE HARD-PUNCHING COWPLUNCHER
LEAPS FULL TILT INTO THE FRAY!

SWING LOW
SWEET
LARIAT!

NOW WE CAN
NOT EVEN RUN
AWAY

LOOKS
LIKE YUH GOT
ROPED INTO
THIS, STRANGER!

YEEHAWWWW

MEANTIME,
IN THE A.R...

SLOW,
STRIDING...
A CLOUD'S
COMING OVER THE
MOON, AND THAT
MEANS YOU GET A
LOOK AT THOSE PICTURES
I TOOK MOONING TO PROJECT
THEM-AND GIVE THE WIZARDS A
TASTE OF THEIR OWN MEDICINE

SUDDENLY,
A HILL
APPEARS
TO BURST
INTO
FLAME.
AND A
GIANT
ARMY
PLUNGES
THREATEN-
INGLY
TOWARD
THE
TROOPS
OF THE
WIZARD
TRIO!

SOON, THE SUN WILL RISE,
AND THESE PICTURES
WILL LOSE THE EFFECT.
BUT MEANWHILE, THEY'RE
CERTAINLY TEAR-IFYING!

AT THE SAME TIME, THE
SHINING KNIGHT ISSUES AN
ORDER TO HIS ARMY...
LIGHTED TAPERS SET FIRE TO
WOODEN WEAPONS... AND
WITH FLAMING SWORDS
HELD HIGH, THE SHINING
KNIGHT'S ARMY CHARGES!

FORWARD!

THE
TERRIFIED
FOES BREAK
RANKS AND
FLEE IN
PANIC!



AS THE KNIGHT'S ARMY
TAKES UP THE CHASE ...

I KNOW A SHORTER
WAY KNIGHT.
WE CAN HEAD
THEM OFF!

THEN
WE
WE CAPTURE THE
ENTIRE
ARMY!



FLUSHED WITH VICTORY, THE
PURSUING TROOPS HASTEN UN-
AWARES INTO THE HEART OF
DANGER!



THEY TAKE A
ROUNDABOUT
PATH, WHILE
WE GO
STRAIGHT!
CAN THE
WIZARDS BE
FOOLS THUS
TO LEAD
THEM!

STRANGER
STILL, WHY DO
THE WIZARDS
RUN TOO? THEY
FLYING CHARIOT
NEED FEAR NEI-
THER GIANTS NOR
FLAMING SWORDS.
AND WHY DO THEY
NOT CAST SOME
SPELL?



SO, AT THE VERY BRINK OF DISASTER...

MALT, DO NOT FOLLOW!
ANOTHER STEP FORWARD
MUST BE A TRAP!



AND ABOVE, FINAL DOOM
THREATENS THE THREE
WIZARDS!

WE GOT 'EM
SURROUNDED,
KID!

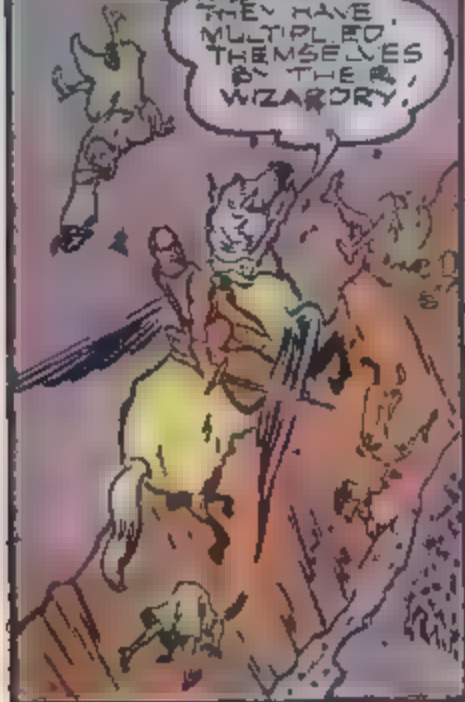
NOW MUST WE
USE OUR MAGIC
TO SAVE
OURSELVES!

WIZARD CHARIOTS MULTIPLY MAGICALLY IN
NUMBER... BUT TOO LATE!

REVERSE
THY MAGIC,
FOOL!

...I CANNOT
MY WTS ARE OVER-
TURNED!

I WOULD RESCUE
THEM! BUT WHICH
ARE THE REAL
AND WHICH THE
PHANTOMS? I
KNOW NOT
THEY HAVE
MULTIPLIED
THEMSELVES
BY THE
WIZARDRY.



AND WHILE THE SHIN-
ING KNIGHT HESITATES
THE THREE WIZ-
ARDS ARE SWEEPED A-
WAY TO DEATH - VIC-
TIMS OF THEIR OWN
SORCERY!

NOW THE MAGIC ROD IS
GONE THE PHANTOMS
HAVE DISAPPEARED
BUT IT'S
TOO LATE!



LATER...

YOU'VE DONE
THE JOB BOYS...
WITH THOSE
WIZARDS FINISHED
AND THE ARMY
BEATEN THERE'LL
BE NO MORE WAR
AROUND HERE!

THEY DESERVED
THEIR FATE... AND
IF THERE ARE ANY
MORE LIKE THEM,
ANYWHERE...
WE'LL MAKE
SURE THEY GET
WHAT'S COMING
TO THEM!



HOMeward BOUND ARE THE SEVEN
SOLDIERS OF VICTORY... NOT KNOW-
ING AS THEY SAUL SERENELY THROUGH
THE AIR, THAT A DARKENING DESIGN
FOR CRIME WILL SOON WHIRL
FORTH ITS CHALLENGE AND
SUMMON THEM TOGETHER
AGAIN TO FACE NEW DANGERS
IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF...

LEADING COMICS!

SMOKE SCREEN

by Ted Wells

THEY all liked him in town.

It was a small town, too, but it was growing. Already, Mr. Meeker, who represented the Chamber of Commerce, had reported that down Washington way, the big-wigs of the War Production Board were giving serious consideration to conflicts, and there was every indication that Mayville soon would have its factories converted to martial production.

Naturally, when a stranger comes to town, and doesn't make any bones about having money, but goes straight to the bank and tells his business, you should cotton to him.

But Willie Sharp was a right clever bank robber. Towns smarter than Mayville, with many times its two man police force hadn't been able to catch him.

And Willie was sure neither Ed Connor or Tom Lafey, the town's two constables, could cope with him.

He wasn't in town two days before he had those lads sized up. Lafey was the talkative type, good-natured and cheery. Connor was a little more reserved, and had a reputation for frugality. They used to say, in town, that Ed never grew a mustache because then he wouldn't be able to smoke his two-for-a-nickel cigars practically down to his upper lip.

All these things and more, Willie Sharp found out as he visited the mens' clubs in Mayville. Oh, he was smart, this Mr. Sharp, and I ought to know. And maybe you ought to know who's telling this story. It's me, Ed Connor, the night constable. And I want to say it isn't true about those two-for-a-nickels.

Mr. Sharp was a right imposing looking man. He was well-built and what in Mayville

is called a "natty dresser." Leastways, Jenks, who runs the Toggery Shop says that's what you call him. "From tip to toe, Mr. Sharp is impeccably dressed," Jenks used to say. And he'd point out every piece of Mr. Sharp's clothes, from the light Stetson hat to the wing tipped shoes that were shiny as all get out.

Naturally, with an entrance like that, Mr. Sharp had plenty of people on his side. He was invited everywhere.

And he took advantage of it. Days when he wasn't looking the town over, Willie Sharp was playing golf at the country club. He had a guest card sponsored by none other than Judge Watkins. Seems the Judge, who was the bank's biggest depositor, figured that when Mr. Sharp brought his industries into town and deposited a big wad in the bank, he might be the biggest depositor. So the Judge played safe and on Mr. Sharp's side.

Willie Sharp gloried in this, and the town gloried in Willie. He was generous, contributing liberally to the community chest and buying big blocks of chance books from the Legion when they held their affair.

Of course, the plans for the factory hadn't been approved yet. But the town's best architect was still working on them.

Naturally, Banker Dawson couldn't let this go by, so he put in a few thousand words or so on Mr. Sharp's business acumen.

None realized this more than Willie Sharp. Wisely, he had declined an invitation to stay at the Judge's house until he had purchased one of his own. He was making his home and office in the Hitching Post, the

town's biggest—and only—hotel.

It was quite a lively place at that, and Mr. Sharp used to stand around the cigar counter and swap stories every now and then with the salesmen. He had a ready wit, and was more than likeable. Like the Judge said, he was made for Mayville, and Mayville was made for him.

All the time, he was laughing up his sleeve.

Sure, he had made friends. Everybody in town liked him, including the two constables, yours truly and Ed Lafey. I'll never forget the night I was going on duty and stopped off at the Hitching Post cigar stand.

Mr. Sharp came by. "Constable," he said, grabbing the box from my hand. "These are no smokes for a man like you." He reached over the counter and grabbed a box of Corona-Cotonas. Before I could say anything, he had stuffed a big handful of these expensive cigars in the pocket of my coat. "Try those, Constable," he said, "and you'll never smoke weed again." He slapped me on the back. Naturally, I couldn't get sore.

"Thank, Mr. Sharp," I said. "But they sure cost a powerful lot of money."

"What's money?" He looked at me. "Everything?"

I had to agree to that. Although it set me to thinking.

Meanwhile, I enjoyed the smokes. They helped me to think.

Well, the days went by, and Willie Sharp used to drop into the bank almost every day. I remember seeing him the afternoon Banker Dawson asked me to drop in. Mr. Sharp was just leaving.

I only stayed about five minutes with Mr. Dawson. He had wanted to talk to me about the coal for the winter. My brother-in-law runs a fuel and grain shop and, as usual, I had gotten him the delivery. Mr. Dawson and I agreed that night was the best time for putting it in. The chute was right out on Main Street and the slide would have obstructed traffic.

I had no idea what Willie Sharp had on his mind that night.

Nobody did.

Willie Sharp was sure of this as, chuckling, he made his preparations for the evening's job. The time for which he had been waiting, was at hand. His constant visits to the bank had borne fruit. Tonight, in the vaults were stacks of currency and negotiable bonds. They had been brought in for the monthly payroll at the yards and the watch factories.

Everything was going to be fine. This would be an easy knock over. Willie Sharp actually knew the combination of the vault, and he knew where every alarm wire was located. Disconnecting them would be as easy as getting in the back door and out the front. There was method in this latter escape. If, by chance, anybody should see him in front of the bank, it would be easy to explain he was taking a walk.

People, leastways honest people, don't take walks around back doors.

It was shortly after midnight when Willie Sharp sailed forth. The town was asleep, there was only one Constable, me, on duty, and the bank didn't need a watchman. So it never had hired one.

Within fifteen minutes, Willie Sharp had the job done. It was a wonder he could stuff the money and bonds into the bag he was carrying, he was laughing so. This was the safest touch he had ever made and to show what he thought of it, he left the vault door open, so

the first one the next morning would see it.

He was still laughing as he went to the front door, disconnected the alarm wire, and slid out into the street, leaving the door open, this time because he couldn't lock it from the outside.

He started down the street. Something caused him to look back. And then he saw the tall, gangling figure rounding the corner. Had the man seen him?

He wasn't sure, but he didn't dare run. The figure was still about a block and a half away. Willie Sharp crept closer to the front of the buildings, started sliding. Then he reached the corner and disappeared. He was surprised to find his heart pounding. It was still pounding when he reached the safety of his room.

He had no intentions of leaving town, yet. He wanted to appear as surprised as everyone else when news of the robbery reached the town. Then, on the pretext of visiting a neighboring town, he could drive away. He didn't want to be on the scene when the Feds arrived.

He sighed, untied his expensive shoes, and kicked them off. He felt very happy. No one would ever suspect him. He had left no traces. Happily, he peeled off his coat, placed the bag of loot on the bed.

A knock sounded. Automatically, Willie Sharp whipped the bag from the bed, threw it underneath. "Come in," he called, cheerily. "Who—"

The words almost froze in his throat. "Why, Constable Connor," he said, "what can I do for you?"

Yeah, it was me. Naturally, in a case like this a man's got to have evidence. You don't go around just accusing big shots like Mr. Sharp of robbery. He must have known it, too, because he was smiling confident like even when I picked up one of the shoes that caught my eye. That way, incidental-

ly, I managed to see the bag under the bed.

"Like those shoes, Constable?" His expression was a little puzzled. Maybe he was wondering if I really did see him, though, I found out later, he didn't know it was me turned the corner that time.

I looked at the shoes, and then I said: "Mind if I open that bag, Mr. Sharp?"

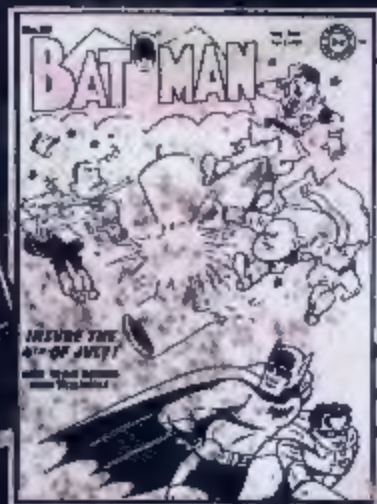
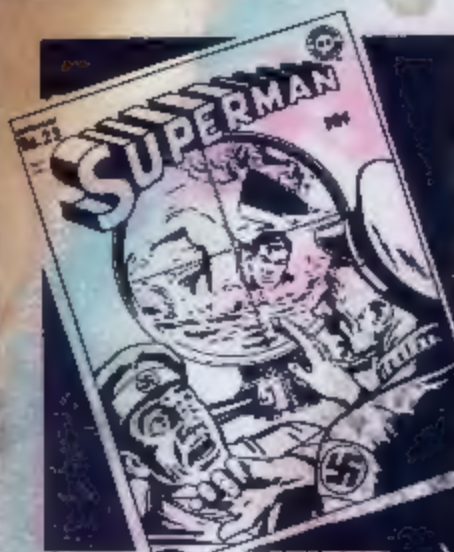
He was quick, I'll say that for him. Lucky I broke his wrist when he reached for the gun under the pillow. Oh, he came along all right after that, but he was sure puzzled about the shoes. Until I told Judge Dawson the story.

"You see, Judge," I said, while Willie Sharp listened, that brother-in-law of mine, as you know, is lazy and shiftless. He finished putting the coal into the bank tonight around twelve. I just got on duty about then, so at twelve fifteen I went round the bank to see if that no-account relative of mine swept away the coal dust on the sidewalk."

Judge, he didn't. And what did I find but footprints in the coal dust, fresh footprints, Judge, of fancy soles. And I realized I really had seen somebody coming out of the bank door, only I was a block away. And Judge, when I tested the bank door I found it open—and the vault inside was open, too.

"Well, Judge," I said, "nobody in town but one man had those soles on his shoes. So I went to see Mr. Sharp, and sure enough—there's coal dust on his soles! That's real evidence, Judge. And so's the money."

That's all. Maybe you read the rest in the big city papers. How Willie Sharp went to jail. Incidentally, I never did tell him how his giving me those expensive cigars made me suspicious, 'stead of friendly. I'll always suspect strangers who go around handing out cigars like that!



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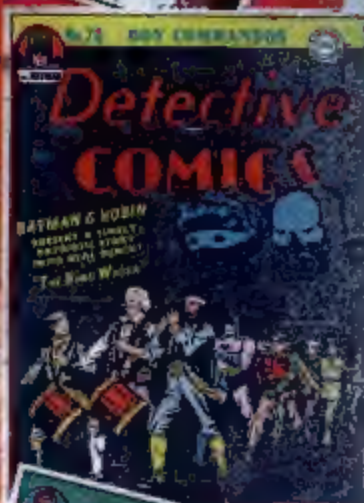


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BIG
EIGHT!**
"TOPS"
IN
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